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THE  
SACRAMENT OF PENANCE.

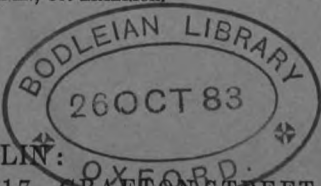
No. II.

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The Confessional.

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BY THE  
REV. JOHN THOMAS WALLER,  
RECTOR OF KILCORNAN, CO. LIMERICK.

DUBLIN:  OXFORD.  
GEORGE HERBERT, 117, GRAFTON STREET.  
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"I would rather see the Church of England perish, than the habitual  
Auricular Confession sanctioned in our pale" (Ryle).

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# THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE.

## NO. II.

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### The Confessional.

"There are two sacraments, ordained of Christ our Lord in the Gospel, that is to say, Baptism and the Supper of the Lord. Those five commonly called sacraments, that is to say, Confirmation, PENANCE, Orders, Matrimony, and Extreme Unction, are not to be counted for sacraments of the Gospel" (25th Article of Church of Ireland).

"Every believer of either sex, after coming to years of discretion, *shall faithfully confess all his sins alone, at least once a-year, to his own priest*, and shall endeavour to the utmost of his power to fulfil the penance enjoined, receiving reverently, at least at Easter, the Sacrament of the Eucharist, unless, perhaps, through the counsel of his own priest, for some reasonable cause, he should conclude to abstain at that time from its reception; *otherwise let him be prohibited from entering the church while living, and dying, be deprived of Christian burial*. Wherefore, let this salutary law be frequently published in the churches, lest any one may assume the veil of excuse from the blindness of ignorance" (Council of Lateran, can. 21, A.D. 1215. Hard. Con. Gen., tom. vii., p. 37).

ROMAN-CATHOLIC FRIENDS,—Pursuing the consideration of the Sacrament of Penance, I purpose to bring under your notice another of the parts of this so-called Sacrament, viz.: *Auricular Confession*. Having considered this subject, I am chiefly struck with two grand features in this doctrine of Confession:—the first, that it is not only without foundation in the Word of God, but is entirely opposed to that Word:—the second, that it does not tend to promote morality; but so much the contrary, that its baneful effect upon religion and morals, wherever it is practised, must render Auricular Confession displeasing to God. In the first of these aspects I shall now bring it before you, reserving the second for a future occasion.

It may be affirmed, without fear of contradiction, that *in the whole of the Bible there cannot be found one single passage enjoining the practice of AURICULAR CONFESSION TO A PRIEST*. Confession of sin is

indeed enjoined upon all Christians;\* but it is not to be made in the ear of a fellow-creature, against whom we have never offended; it is to be made to Almighty God, against whom we have sinned, and with whom *alone* there is forgiveness. This is the Scriptural view of Confession, viz.:—Confession to God, and of *this* we have many examples in the Bible. Thus David said, “I have acknowledged my sins to Thee,” and again, “I said I will confess against myself my injustice to the Lord, and Thou hast forgiven the wickedness of my sin” (Psalm xxxi. 5). Let me beg you to keep this in mind when weighing (as I hope you will do) the arguments to be drawn from any text which

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\* “Confession of sin is recognised, and, indeed, commanded, in God’s Word; for if we do not confess our sins, we may rest assured that we shall not obtain pardon of our sins. But the great difference between the Protestant Church and the Church of Rome, is not upon whether confession of sin should be made, but *in what way*, and *to whom* that confession should be made. Accordingly, we have no hesitation in confessing our sins, and, indeed, we commence the service of the Church of England by the confession; for, after the minister has repeated some portion of God’s holy Word, such as ‘If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness,’ he exhorts the congregation to fall down on their knees before God, and humbly to confess their sins to Him, and then comes the confession of sin, in which all the congregation join” (Rev. J. E. Armstrong).

Protestants hold the necessity of confession, as you will see from the following quotation from Dr. Ryle, the present Protestant Bishop of Liverpool:—“*Who are they that ought to confess?*” I answer this question in one plain sentence—All men and women in the world! All are born in sin, and the children of wrath. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Before God all are guilty. . . Without confession there is *no salvation*. The love of God towards sinners is infinite. The readiness of Christ to receive sinners is unbounded. The blood of Christ can cleanse away all sin. *But we must ‘plead guilty’* before God can declare us innocent. We must acknowledge that we surrender at discretion before we can be pardoned and let go free. Sins that are known and not confessed, are sins that are not forgiven; they are yet upon us, and daily sinking us nearer to hell. ‘He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall find mercy’ (Prov. xxviii. 13). . . . *To whom ought confession to be made?* . . . Sin, to speak generally, ought to be confessed to God. He it is whom we have chiefly offended. His are the laws we have broken. To Him all men and women will one day give account. His displeasure is that which sinners have principally to fear. This is what David felt: ‘Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight’ (Psalm li. 4). This is what David practised: ‘I said I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord’ (Psalm xxxii. 5). This is what Joshua advised Achan to do: ‘My son, give glory to God, and make confession to Him’ (Joshua vii. 19). The Jews were right when they said, ‘Who can forgive sins but God only?’ (Mark ii. 7). But . . . ‘*Can vile sinners like us dare to confess our sins to a holy God?*’ Will not the thought of His infinite purity shut our mouths and make us afraid? . . . These are serious questions. But I thank God, they are questions to which the Gospel supplies a full and satisfactory answer. The Gospel reveals *One* who is exactly suited to the wants of souls which desire to confess sin. I say, then, that sin ought to be confessed to God in Christ. I say that sin ought specially to be confessed to

may be brought forward by P. C. in favour of Confession, and to remember that any text which speaks of confession to God, proves nothing at all for his point, as *this* is a strictly Protestant doctrine, and is a thing which we all practise. The point P. C. has to establish from Scripture, is, the *necessity* of private confession to a priest. The question is—Where shall we find Auricular Confession stated in Scripture to be a sacrament, or any part of one?—Where is the universal necessity of it proclaimed?—and where is it mentioned that sins committed after baptism can in no other way be pardoned by God, as is stated in chapter 5 of the xiv. Session of Trent. This question, I

God manifest in the flesh—to Christ Jesus the Lord—to that Jesus who came into the world to save sinners—to that Jesus who died for our sins and rose again for our justification, and now lives at the right hand of God to intercede for all who come to God by Him. He that desires to confess sin, should apply direct to Christ. *Christ is a great High Priest.* Let that truth sink deep into our hearts and never be forgotten. He is sealed and appointed by God the Father for that very purpose. *It is His peculiar office to receive, and hear, and pardon, and absolve sinners. It is His place to receive confessions and to grant plenary absolutions.* It is written in Scripture, 'Thou art a priest for ever;' 'We have a great High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith' (Heb. iv. 14; vi. 20; x. 21, 22). *Christ is a High Priest of Almighty power.* There is no sin that He cannot pardon, and no sinner that He cannot absolve. He has 'all power in heaven and earth.' He has 'power on earth to forgive sins.' He has complete authority to say to the chief of sinners, 'Thy sins are forgiven; go in peace.' He has 'the keys of death and hell.' When He opens, no man can shut (Rom. ix. 5; John x. 30; Matt. xxviii. 18; ix. 6; Luke vii. 48-50; Rev. i. 18; iii. 7). *Christ is a High Priest of infinite willingness* to receive confession of sin. He invites all who feel their guilt to come to Him for relief. 'Come unto me,' he says, 'all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' 'If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.' When the penitent thief cried to Him on the cross, He at once absolved him fully, and gave him an answer of grace (Matt. xi. 28; John vii. 37). . . . This great High Priest is the person whom you and I ought to employ in our confession of sin. It is only through Him and by Him that we should make all our advances to God. In Him we draw nigh to God with boldness, and have access with confidence (Eph. iii. 12). Laying our hand on Him and His atonement, we may 'Come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need' (Heb. iv. 16). *We need no other mediator or priest. We can find no better high priest.* To whom should the sick person disclose his ailment but to the physician? To whom should the prisoner tell his story but to his legal advocate? To whom should the sinner open his heart and confess his sins but to Christ? Why should we confess our sins to angels and dead saints, while we have Christ for a High Priest? Why should we confess to the Virgin Mary, Michael the Archangel, John the Baptist, St. Paul, or any other creature in the unseen world? The Church of Rome enjoins such confessions . . . but when we ask a reason for the practice, we may ask long before getting an answer. There is *no need for such a confession.* CHRIST HAS NOT GIVEN UP HIS OFFICE AND CEASED TO BE A PRIEST" (Ryle's "Home Truths," vol. vii., p. 97).

maintain, he cannot answer, the doctrine being purely *an invention* of his own Church.

Surely it must strike any thinking Roman-catholic, that *in the whole life of the Lord Jesus there is no example of His having exhorted His followers to confession* by a particular enumeration of their sins. In His dealings with sinners, He reproved or instructed them; and, as *he was God*, He frequently forgave them their sins; but He never enjoined on them the practice of Auricular Confession. He pardoned the man sick of the palsy when He saw his "faith," but never required him to enumerate his particular sins by confession. The same thing is manifest in the lives of the Apostles. They spent their time in continually *preaching* forgiveness of sins through Jesus—rebuking, exhorting, and encouraging—yet we have not one instance of any one of them exalting himself as a judge over his fellow-men, and inviting penitents to come and pour *into his ear*, an exact account of the peculiarities of their wicked lives, as a duty necessary to salvation. So you see that the Church of Rome has not even one example to support her doctrine of Confession; far less has she one command of God to urge in defence of this practice. We have in the New Testament several letters written for the guidance of churches; yet we do not find their apostolic authors enjoining ever so remotely the practice of Auricular Confession, though frequently noticing the sins into which some of the members of these churches had fallen. This is an omission for which we can only account by the fact, the practice was unknown to the Apostles; for is it credible that if they believed this doctrine, viz.: that men's sins could not be forgiven after baptism, unless they confessed them to a priest, they would never have pressed this duty upon their converts, or given directions either to the clergy or to the people concerning it. St. Paul says to the Ephesians, that he had "kept back nothing that was profitable to" them; that he was "clear from the blood of all men," and had not "spared to declare unto" them "all the counsel of God"—(Acts xx., verses 20, 26, 27)—yet he had never given them the slightest hint of this mode of forgiveness, though he had made the fullest promises of forgiveness to men on their repentance. Many commands there are in Scripture to *repent*, but *not even one exhortation to practise auricular confession to a priest*.

The Council of Trent, indeed, *asserts* that this doctrine is of divine origin;\* but what is its authority for saying so? You shall see—the following are its decrees on the subject:—"The universal Church has

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\* Dr. Wordsworth, Bishop of Lincoln, said:—"The Church of [England, grounding her doctrine on Holy Scripture, teaches that it appertains to Almighty God, and to Him alone, to forgive sins (Commination Service). The Church of England teaches that it is repugnant to Holy Scripture, and to the doctrine and practice of the ancient Catholic Church, to affirm that it is necessary for men to confess their sins privately to a priest, in order to obtain pardon. . . . The divines of the Church of England have proved that the doctrine of the Church of Rome, that private, or auricular, confession to a priest is necessary, was not generally received in the twelfth century (see Gratian Dist. I. de Penitentia, c. 79), and was first imposed as an article of faith in the year 1215, at the

always understood that the entire confession of sins was instituted by the Lord, as a part of the sacrament of Penance now explained; and is of divine right *necessary to all who have fallen after baptism* " (Sess. xiv., cap. 5). The 6th Canon says:—"If any one shall deny either that sacramental confession was instituted by divine command, or that it is *necessary to salvation*, or shall say that the manner of confessing secretly to a priest alone, which the Catholic Church hath ever observed from the beginning, and doth observe, is alien from the institution and commands of Christ, and is a human invention, let him be accursed." Again, the 8th Canon says:—"Whosoever says that confession of every sin . . . is merely a human tradition, . . . or that all Christians of both sexes are not bound to observe the same once a year . . . let him be accursed." The fathers of Trent conspired together to stop the mouths of men with an anathema, who should deny sacramental confession to be of divine institution, and necessary to salvation; and yet you will perceive that the Council did not attempt to prove from Scripture that which it thus required to be received under pain of damnation. It must be taken solely on the authority of the Church of Rome, as Maldonatus tells us. He says, that "all the Canonists following their first interpreter say that confession was brought in *only by the law of the Church*" (Disp. de Sac. tom. xi., de Confess. cap. 2), and not by any divine precept. Thus you see that THE CHURCH OF ROME MAKES THAT NECESSARY TO SALVATION WHICH GOD HAS NOT MADE NECESSARY. She says it is a sin to neglect this ordinance; but, as she cannot bring any text to prove it, we urge the words of St. Paul that "where there is no law neither is there transgression" (Romans iv. 15). It was the opinion of several of the ablest divines of your own Church that Confession was never instituted by divine command, and they did not scruple to acknowledge that it was received merely from the Church. The gloss on the Canon Law, enquiring when or where auricular confession was instituted, says:—"Some say it was instituted in Paradise, others say it was instituted when Joshua called upon Achan to confess his sin; others say it was instituted in the New Testament by St. James." Here are three different views held by divines of your Church relative to the institution of confession; you will observe that not one of the

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Fourth Council of Lateran (Canon 21. See Labbe Concil. tom. xi., p. 172). *The Church of England rejects the terms 'Sacramental Penance' and 'Sacramental Confession.'* She affirms in her 25th Article, that 'Penance is not to be accounted a sacrament of the Gospel.' All her divines have shown that the doctrine of the so-called Sacrament of Penance, as taught by the Church of Rome, is beset with contradictions, inasmuch as there is no consistency in her teaching as to what constitutes the form of the said sacrament, and in what its matter consists (Hooker VI. iv. 3); and inasmuch as that Church makes satisfaction to be a part of the Sacrament of Penance (Con. Trid., Sess. xiv. 3), and yet separates satisfaction from it, by pronouncing absolution first, and by imposing works of satisfaction to be done afterwards, which is repugnant to the teaching of Scripture, and to the doctrine and practice of the primitive Church" (Bishop's Speech to Archdeacon and Deans of Lincoln).

three opinions was, that it was instituted by Christ. And now you will see that the writer of the gloss himself does not agree with any of the three; for he goes on to say:—"It is better said that it was instituted by a certain universal tradition of the Church; and this tradition of the Church is obligatory as a precept. Therefore confession of deadly sins is necessary with us (*i.e.*, Latins), but not with the Greeks, because no such tradition hath come to them" (Gloss. de Pœnit. dis. 5, in Pœnit). From this you will see that at that time it was not agreed upon in the Church what was the origin of confession; that the opinion of Semeca, the author of the Gloss, was that it originated—not in Scripture, but in a tradition of the Church, and that even that tradition was not clear or certain—that he was also of opinion that far from confession being binding on all Christians, it was only to be observed in the Latin Church—that it was not necessary to the Greeks, because they had not such a tradition among them. The Roman correctors under Gregory XIII. put this note upon the margin, in order to counteract the effect of what was here said—"Nay, Confession was ordained by our Lord, and by God's law is necessary to all that fall into mortal sin after baptism, as well Greeks as Latins." To prove this, they quote—not Scripture—not even the writings of the early Fathers, but (great authority!) the XIV. Sess. of the Council of Trent, FIFTEEN HUNDRED YEARS AFTER OUR LORD, which cursed all who denied it. Panormitan, the great canonist, agrees with the opinion of Semeca, which I have given you, in tracing the origin of Confession to a general tradition of the Church. He says—"There is not any clear authority which shows that God or Christ ordained that confession should be made to a priest" (in V. Decret de Pœnit et Remiss., cap. xii., sect. 18). And the famous Cardinal Cajetan said that Auricular Confession could not be proved directly from the Bible; but *only inferentially or by way of implication*. Here, then, is a Divine ordinance—a sacrament—a doctrine absolutely necessary to salvation, which is *proved only by an inueniō*. What reasoning man can be satisfied with such proof as this?

I remain your sincere friend,

JOHN THOMAS WALLER.

Castletown Manor, Pallaskenry.

## Where do we find our blessed Lord or his Apostles inculcate the practice of the Confessional?

"Every tongue shall confess to God"\* (Romans xiv. 11).

ROMAN-CATHOLIC FRIENDS,—P. C. reproaches me that my "other great objection to Confession is, that it is not found in the Scriptures."

\* "Q. Is this [auricular] confession of our sins necessary for obtaining salvation? A. It is ordained by Jesus Christ as *absolutely necessary* for this purpose" (Hay's "Sincere Christian," p. 68).

I accept this reproach ; and candidly confess, that "*my great objection to Confession is, that it is not found in the Scriptures.*"\* And this fact I am glad to find virtually admitted by P. C. himself, for after these words he goes on (not to endeavour to prove Confession out of Scripture, but) to reproach me for taking the Scripture as my sole Rule of Faith, saying at the same time, that it is not his. *He* has other sources, he says, whence to draw his Rule of Faith—"the unwritten teachings of the Holy Spirit"—and, as may be inferred from his letter, the writings of the Fathers; and he says, that when I ask you to reject the doctrine of Auricular Confession, because not found in the Holy Scriptures, I am asking you to give up your Rule of Faith (*i.e.*, Tradition and the Fathers), and follow ours (*i.e.*, the Holy Scriptures). Is not this tantamount to acknowledging, that Confession is not to be proved out of the Scriptures, and must depend for its proof upon the other branches of the Roman-catholic Rule of Faith, *viz.*, Tradition, Fathers, &c., &c. For if it were to be found in the Word

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\* "But a candid inquirer may ask, 'Is not confession of sins taught in Scripture as connected with salvation through faith in Christ?' As candidly as the inquiry may be made do I answer—Yes; but *not* confession to a priest, or as a part of a system, through which pardon is to be procured. If we refer to the Scripture passages on this subject (Luke xvi. 3, 4; James v. 16; 1 John i. 9; Prov. xxviii. 13; Psalm xxxii. 5, 6; li. 4, 5, 7, 9, 14), we shall find that confession of sin *is to be made to God, to the party wronged by us, and to each other; but not a word about secret confession of our sins in the ears of a priest*; and not a shadow or echo of a word about priestly absolution or priestly imposed penance. But what says the Church of Rome in the Council of Lateran?—"Let every one, both men and women, truly make confession of all their sins at least once a-year to *their own priest*, or some other, have leave first from their own priest, else he can neither *absolve* nor *bind* him' (Canon 21). What says the Council of Trent (Session xiv., Canon 6)—'If any one shall deny sacramental confession either to be instituted, or to be necessary to salvation by *Divine right*, or shall say the manner of making secret confession to the priest alone . . . is not instituted and commanded by Christ, but is a human invention'—what then? 'ANATHEMA!—LET HIM BE ACCURSED.' Here is the language and here is the spirit of the Church of Rome; for the decrees of the Council of Trent are irrevocable, and the thunders of her anathema as loud as ever. One passage more from that famous Council—'If any shall affirm that in the sacrament of Penance it is not by the ordinance of God necessary for the obtaining the remission of sins, to confess all and every one of these mortal sins, the memory whereof, by due and diligent premeditation, may be had, even such as are hidden, and be against the two last commandments of the Decalogue, together with the circumstances which change the kind of sin, but that this confession is only profitable to instruct and comfort the penitent' . . . What then? 'ANATHEMA!—LET HIM BE ACCURSED' (Sess. xiv., Canon 7). *I deny*—every Bible-Christian denies—both the one and the other of these two propositions, just because they cannot be found in God's Word, and are contrary to the teaching of the Holy Ghost. But at this moment—while I am speaking—the curse of the Church of Rome (*however harmless*—Prov. xxvi. 2) is upon me, and only because the Bible, and not the Church of Rome, is the sole rule of my faith" (Rev. G. Fisk's "Sevenfold Aspect of Popery," p. 23).

of God, no doubt P. C. would have been glad to show you where ; for I have invariably remarked, that a Roman-catholic never takes refuge in the Fathers and Tradition, until he has been wholly worsted in arguing out of the Word of God. As long as he possibly can, the Romish controversialist invariably tries to sustain his doctrines from Scripture ; and we are never better pleased than when we find a Roman-catholic take up *this* ground ; as on *this* a Protestant feels himself secure as on a rock. When, however, the Romish disputant finds this ground wholly swept from beneath his feet, he then retreats for shelter into the writings of the Fathers, and the still more uncertain depths of "unwritten teaching ;" that elastic rule which can be enlarged to fit any dimensions required, or collapse again when necessary.

P. C. considers it strange that I should have brought as an argument against Confession, the fact that the doctrine was never taught by our Saviour.\* You will, however, observe that *he does not attempt to deny the fact*. I had stated, "that in the whole life of Jesus there is no example of His having exhorted His followers to Confession." *This statement P. C. has not attempted to deny ;* on the contrary, he evidently admits the fact ; for he endeavours to account for it by saying, that there was no need that any one should confess to him, as Jesus knew all hearts. But you will judge whether this sufficiently accounts for the remarkable fact, that our Saviour never exhorted any one to confess, when you consider that surely the Almighty himself "knows the hearts of the children of men," yet requires, notwithstanding, that we should confess our faults to Him, no doubt to humble us, and make us feel how great punishment we deserve from Him. It is absolutely necessary, that we should confess our faults to God, although He knows them already. The duty of acknowledging or confessing sin to God, is maintained by all parties ; but the necessity of private *sacramental* confession to a priest, with a view to obtaining judicial absolution, is the doctrine we oppose. The necessity of Auricular Confession rests altogether on the doctrine of Absolution ; for the argument of the Roman-catholic is, that the priest has power

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\* "They adduce, in proof of confession, the fact related in the Acts (ch. xix. 18)—'And many that believed came, and confessed, and shewed their deeds.' One must be thoroughly prejudiced in favour of confession to desire to support it with this passage ! We have no desire to theologize, in order to lead the people, for whom we write, to understand the passage in question in the same sense as we understand it. No ; let our readers judge for themselves : let them read not verse 18 only, but from verse 13 to 20, and they will see that the miracles that Paul wrought by the power of God, and the mockery of the false exorcists to the evil spirit, terrified the new converts of Ephesus to such a degree, that *many* of them confessed their deeds—probably the wrong they had done in not believing Paul sooner. Where do we find the confessional boxes ? They publicly confess their deeds. Where is the compulsion ? They went voluntarily ; not all, but *many*. In this passage it is a case of public, not auricular confession ; of free, not compulsory confession" (Desanctis on Confession, p. 12).

to bind and loose, and that this he cannot do without hearing every particular sin. "Hence arises" (says the Catechism of Trent), "a necessity on the part of the penitent of making known to the priest, through the medium of confession, each and every sin."\* Now I am endeavouring to show you, when writing on the subject of Absolution, that no such power as that of absolving judicially from sins committed against God has ever been given to the priests of the Church; and I think their admitted inability to know the heart is, in itself, a proof that they *do not* possess the equally divine prerogative of forgiving sins. When, therefore, the Church of Rome assumed for her clergy the power of forgiving sins, she ought, at the same time, to have claimed for them a power of reading the hearts of men (which alone would enable them to judge according to truth), rather than to have invented the doctrine of Confession to help them out of their difficulty.

But, I ask, why is it necessary that the priest, in order that he may bestow absolution, should know all the details of each particular sin? As we know that, without repentance, no sin can be pardoned, and that with it, all sins may, it must needs follow that it is not the number of the sins, but the condition of the person—the determination of amendment—the steadfast faith in Christ—the true conversion of the heart—that the priest has to consider. If a man be sincerely

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\* "ROMISH CONFESSION NOT WARRANTED BY SCRIPTURE.—Since our quarrel is not with confession itself, which may be of singular use and behoof, but with some tyrannous strains in the practice of it, which are the violent forcing and perfect fulness thereof, it shall be sufficient for us herein to stand upon our negative, that there is no Scripture in the whole Book of God wherein either such necessity, or such extremes of confession is commanded—a truth so clear, that it is generally confessed by their own canonists. Did we question the lawfulness of confession, we should be justly accountable for our grounds from the Scriptures of God; now that we cry down only some injurious circumstances therein, well we may require from the faultors thereof their warrants from God, which, if they cannot show, they are sufficiently convinced of a presumptuous obtrusion. Indeed, our Saviour said to His Apostles and their successors, 'Whose sins ye remit, &c.' (John xx. 23). *But did He say, 'No sin shall be remitted but what ye remit?' or 'No sin shall be remitted by you, but what is particularly numbered unto you?'* St. James bids us 'Confess our sins one to another' (James v. 16). But would they have the priest shrive himself to the penitent as well as the penitent to the priest? This act must be *mutual*, not single. 'Many believing Ephesians came, and confessed, and showed their deeds' (Acts xix. 18). Many, *but not all*, not *omnes utriusque sexus*. They confessed their deeds; some that were notorious, *not all their sins*. Contrarily rather, so did Christ send His Apostles, as the Father sent Him (John xx. 21). He was both their warrant and their pattern. But that gracious Saviour of ours many a time gave absolution, *where was* no particular mention of sins. *Only, the sight of the paralytic's faith fetched from Him, 'Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee' (Matt. ix. 2): the noted sinner in Simon's house, approving the truth of her repentance by humble and costly testimonies of love, without any enumeration of her sins, heard, 'Thy sins be forgiven thee' (Bishop Hall's "Old Religion," chap. xiii., sect. 2).*

penitent, a thousand sins are pardoned as soon as one ; for the infinite mercy of God in Christ is sufficient to blot out *ten thousand* sins, and nothing else can atone for *one*. All the information, therefore, which the priest ought to require is, whether the penitent have that true repentance which God will accept. Whether the Fathers considered it necessary, that each particular sin should be thus enumerated in order to obtain forgiveness, you can judge from the words of St. Augustine, who says, speaking of the Psalmist's expression—"I said I will confess my sins unto the Lord, and so Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin"—that *here forgiveness was promised by God even before any confession was really made*, but directly upon the *intention* to do so arising in the mind. "I said I *will* confess my sins." His confession was not yet come to his mouth, yet God heard the voice of his heart (Augustine in Psalm 32). Do you think it is at all needful, or in any degree profitable, either to the priest or penitent to *go into special details* of sins? I maintain that, on the contrary, it has a demoralising effect upon both ; and that the priest knowing the particular circumstances of a man's sin is of no avail ; for the only condition necessary to the obtaining of forgiveness is, that the man really repent of it, and this last and *only important point* the priest can never know from Confession, as this obliges him to judge only from the man's profession of himself. On this subject Augustine says again :—"What have I to do with men, that they may hear my confession, as if they were about to heal my wounds? A race *inquisitive to know the life of another*, negligent to correct their own. Why do they desire to hear from you what you are? and how do they know whether I speak truth when they hear from myself, since no man knows what is in man but the spirit of man which is in him" (Aug. Confess. lib. c. 3). The Church of Rome contradicts herself on this subject, for though she says (Con. Trid. Sess. xiv. c. 5) that it is impossible for the priest to forgive, unless he be acquainted with every particular sin, yet she again decrees, that if a Roman-catholic unavoidably forgets to confess any sin, in that case he is pardoned without confessing, and it is then sufficient for them to say, "From my secret ones cleanse me, O Lord" (Psalm xviii. 13). Now, when we consider that the greater number of Roman-catholics only confess twice a-year, it is evident that this is a case which must very frequently occur with many hundreds of people of bad memory : and if, in all such cases, these judges are able to pass sentence *without* knowing the particular cause, how can it be necessary that they should know it in any case. Besides this, Roman-catholics are only obliged to confess mortal sins—not venial ; and as a very large number of the sins committed may, by an indulgent priest, be cleansed under the latter head, what is this but allowing that the priest can forgive without confession?" Since they themselves admit, that the words of

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\* "We believe that through the system of the confessional great evil has been wrought in the Church of Rome, and that our Reformers acted wisely in allowing it no place in our Reformed Church ; and we take this opportunity of

Christ did not make it necessary that they should confess their venial sins, on what plea can they argue that they are bound by them to confess their mortal sins? We are thus led to the conclusion, that either venial sins can be forgiven without any repentance, or else if a man can repent of his venial sins in such a manner as to obtain forgiveness without going to the priest at all, then confessing to the priest is *not* an essential part of repentance.

But though P. C. himself chose the writings of the Fathers, as being the branch of his Rule of Faith best calculated to prove the doctrine of Confession for him, let us see whether even his quotations from the Fathers afford any clear testimony to this doctrine. I do not think they do; as many of them refer to *confession to God*, which Protestants also hold to be perfectly necessary, and some of them merely direct people to *ask the advice* and guidance of their clergymen, which is a thing also practised by Protestants. For instance, what does his quotations from Ambrose prove for the Romish doctrine of Auricular Confession: "If you will obtain grace, confess your sins, for an humble confession bursts all the chains of sin." Now, where is the priest here?—*Where is the sacred tribunal?* where is anything said of the *necessity under pain of damnation of confessing privately to a priest?* St. Ambrose evidently spoke of confession to God; for we can prove, out of other places in his works, that he did not hold sacramental Absolution. For instance, where he says:—"Also no one pardons sins but God only; because it is equally written, 'Who can pardon sins but God alone?'" (De Spr. Sanc. lib. 3, c. 18, Ben. Ed., 1690). In fact, I do not know why P. C. brought forward this quotation, except it were that he thought that the word "confession" occurring in it might *look well* in the eyes of very careless and superficial readers. Neither does his quotation from Chrysostom prove anything for him; for when this Father says the Christian priest effects the

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expressing our entire disapproval of any such innovation, and our firm determination to do all in our power to discourage it.

"A. C. CANTUAR.

"W. EBOR.

"Lambeth Palace, 16th June, 1873."

Dr. Tait, late Archbishop of Canterbury, said:—"It was early in my episcopate that a case was brought before me where a curate had committed himself, in my judgment, in this matter of confession, and I was obliged to cancel his licence, and remove him from the position which he occupied, because of an indiscreet use of this system of which we are speaking. . . . I agree with what the Bishop of Lichfield has said, that if any young man in a curacy, whether appointed by myself or not, were to fall into similar objectionable practices in the matter of confession, I should think it my duty to revoke his licence, as I did in the case referred to. . . . Where we find that either a young man, or an old man, has transgressed the limits of propriety, and *has introduced that which is alien to the Church of England*, we are bound to exercise whatever authority we possess, in order to avoid the evil which is thus likely to spring up" (Debate in Convocation, *Guardian*, May 9th, 1878).

cure of the souls, he does not add, "by his absolution," which would be necessary to prove P. C.'s point. I showed you in a former letter that we also believe that ministers may be said not only "to effect the cure," but even to *save souls* by preaching Jesus to them (1 Tim. iv. 16), therefore P. C.'s quotation from Chrysostom proves nothing for Romish Confession. And, as I have shown you with respect to St. Ambrose, I can also show you that neither did this Father (Chrysostom) believe in the doctrine of Auricular Confession; for he says:—"It is not necessary that thou shouldest confess in the presence of witnesses: let the enquiry of thy offences be made in thy thought: let this judgment be without a witness; let God *only* see thee confessing" (Hom. de Pœnit et Confess. tom. 5). And, "Therefore I entreat and pray you, that you would continually make your *confession* to God. For I do not bring thee into the theatre of thy fellow-servants, *neither do I constrain thee to discover thy sins unto men: unclasp thy conscience before God and show thy wounds unto Him, and of Him ask a medicine.* Show them to Him that will not reproach, but heal thee. For although thou hold thy peace, He knoweth all" (Hom. 5, de Incomp. Dei natura). Again, in his quotation from Origen, that Father is merely speaking of seeking the *advice* of the clergyman; and he tells those who are in any trouble about their souls, to seek some minister who will sympathise with them, so that when his skill shall be known and his pity felt, they shall follow what he shall advise. This is exactly what our Church states ought to be done, viz., to seek the advice and assistance of a clergyman in any case of doubt or difficulty. As to his quotation from Basil, he ought to have continued it a little further, for after the words, "Even so ought the confession of our sins to be made unto such as are able to cure them," St. Basil adds—"according to that which is written, 'ye that are strong bear the infirmities of the weak,' that is, take them away by your diligence" (Basil in Regul.). Mark—not "by your absolution," but "by your diligence," that is, in endeavouring to lead sinners to Christ for pardon. Upon the whole, P. C.'s quotations from the Fathers, although he concludes them with the triumphant words—"Now is there any of the Christian doctrines more clearly proved out of the Fathers than Confession?" yet go very far to show how totally different a thing was the kind of Confession practised in the early Church, from that which has been newly invented by Rome. To give one example of this—in the very quotation he gives from Origen, that Father speaks of it being optional with the clergyman to declare publicly in the congregation any sin concerning which he may have been consulted by a penitent. The following are the words of Origen, as given by P. C.:—"Should he think your disease to be such, that it should be declared in the assembly of the faithful, whereby others may be edified and yourself easily reformed—this must be done." Now, what is the likeness between this and the Romish doctrine of Auricular Confession, in which the seal of secrecy is so inviolably to be observed by the confessor, that he is instructed by his Church rather to lie, ay, even to perjure himself in the most awful manner before God, than to break it.

Speaking of this Rule of his Church, P. C. said—"The seal of Auricular Confession these priests of ours have never broken."\* Now P. C.'s own quotation from Origen bears me out in saying, that in the primitive Church there was no such custom as that laid down by the Catechism of the Council of Trent. "Secrecy shall be strictly observed, as well by penitent as priest." And again—"Against it (the seal's) sacriligious infraction the Church denounces her heaviest chastisements" (Cat. Con. Trid., 280-2). And we object to this Rule of the Church of Rome, not only because it is opposed to primitive custom, but because the instructions on this point given to the Roman-catholic priests in their colleges train them to a system of falsehood; nay more, their very theology countenances perjury and *demands* it of the confessors. Peter Dens in his theology, which is a class-book in Maynooth College, teaches what the duty of confession is with regard to

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\* De Thou states that the Jesuits were expelled from Venice in 1606, in consequence of "the Senate having discovered that the *Jesuits having availed them of the office of confessors to discover the secrets of families*, and the talents and dispositions of individuals, that by the same process they *knew the strength, resources, and secrets of the State*, AN ACCOUNT OF WHICH THEY SENT EVERY SIX MONTHS TO THEIR PROVINCIAL OR VISITOR" (De Thou's History, vol. xii.).

"Notwithstanding all the natural, divine, and ecclesiastical prohibitions issued against the violation of this sacramental knowledge, and revelation of sacramental confessions, still in our days we see all laws, divine and human, transgressed by the ministers and supporters of this corrupt tribunal, in foreign countries and in our native island. We witness, by woeful experience, the officers and prelates of inquisitorial councils in different countries authorising and commanding confessors to reveal the sins and secrets of their penitents, for the treacherous purposes of machinating their destruction and offering them up as holocausts on the altar of the iniquitous tribunal" (Priest Morrissey's "Inquisition in Ireland," p. 24).

"The general opinion of Roman-catholics is, that priests do not think of or recollect the sins they hear in confession, and much less, talk of and relate them to others; but, with the greatest respect, I can assert the contrary, and prove the fact. . . . I shall unquestionably put the subject matter beyond all doubts of probability. Some lay people informed me that they heard several priests, in company, relating some sins of a delicate nature, of which said clergy acquired knowledge in the confessional, under the seal of that sacred tribunal, at which they were greatly scandalized. . . . I have been myself present in company, at different times, where I witnessed priests revealing heinous sins sacramentally confessed to them. Some priests informed me (extra) without the least necessity, of most enormous crimes they heard in confession, perpetrated between . . . In fact, several priests vie at times among themselves to know which of them could relate or inform each other of the greatest and most odious sins communicated to them in the *sacred confidential tribunal*. . . . A bishop informed me of the sins one of his penitents told him in confession, who was a respectable lady, and an acquaintance of mine. He even mentioned her name. Some coolness existed between a certain friend and myself, to whom I was in the habit of going to confession previous to the misunderstanding. In the course of sometime after he revealed my sacramental confession to others in my presence" (Priest Morrissey's "Inquisition in Ireland," p. 30).

what may have been communicated to them in the confessional. He speaks as follows :—"What is the seal of sacramental confession? It is the obligation or debt of concealing those things which are known from sacramental confession." He then asks, "Can a case be stated in which it is lawful to break the sacramental seal?" And he answers—"It cannot be stated: although *the life or safety of a man* or even *the ruin of the state depended upon it*." Another question is, "What, therefore, ought a confessor to answer, being interrogated about a truth which he has known through sacramental confession alone?" Now mark the answer to this question—"He ought to answer that he does not know it, and if necessary confirm the same by an oath." Now, I put this to your moral sense—can you agree to such a doctrine as this; the priest is *deliberately taught and instructed* to tell a lie and to swear to it. As this is a subject on which I shall have a good deal more to say to you, space would not allow me to conclude it in this letter. I hope, therefore, you will excuse my breaking off abruptly here; and I shall resume the subject (D.V.) in my next.

I remain your sincere friend,

JOHN THOMAS WALLER.

Castletown Manor, Pallaskenry.

## The Fatal Effects of the "Seal" of the Confessional.

"Do you not pray every day to God—"Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those that trespass against us?" If God forgives us, what do you want more?

ROMAN-CATHOLIC FRIENDS,—You may remember that in my last letter on Confession I was unavoidably obliged to break off, just as I was engaged in setting before you the manner in which the priests at Maynooth are instructed to observe the Seal of Confession. I, therefore, resume the subject where I had left it off, viz., at that part of the instruction given by Dens, where the question is asked—"Can a case be stated in which it is lawful to break the sacramental Seal?" The answer to which is—"It cannot be stated; although *the life or safety of a man, or even the ruin of the State, depend upon it*." From these instructions of Dens we may also infer that, should the life of our Sovereign be in danger, or should the State be threatened with ruin, a priest dare not reveal any secret obtained through the medium of confession, even though the discovery might save the life of her Majesty, or preserve the country from destruction.\* The next

\* "Saints not being canonized in the Church of Rome till their lives and writings have been examined and pronounced to be in no way censurable, let us observe a saint's conduct on this head, viz., that of Pope Pius V.; and as the

question is—"What, therefore, ought a confessor to answer being interrogated about a truth which he has known through Sacramental Confession alone?" To which the answer is—"He ought to answer that he does not know it; and if necessary, confirm the same by an oath." Such is the course of training prescribed by your Church for her priests; and now mark the casuistry with which she endeavours to conceal the horrid deformity of this doctrine. Dens proceeds, "It is objected—it is in no case lawful to tell a falsehood—but the confessor would tell a falsehood, because he knows the truth. Ans.—I deny the minor (that is, that the confessor would lie), because such is interrogated as a man, and he knows it *as God* (says St. Thomas, quest. II., art. i.)." Again—"What if it be directly inquired of the confessor if whether he knows a particular thing by Sacramental Confession?" In this case, Dens proposes two alternatives, one which is, that "he can say absolutely, not in relation to the question, 'I know nothing;' because the word 'I' restricts to knowledge acquired by him as a man" (Den's Theol. tom. vi. de Frac. Sig., No. 160). Now, setting aside the blasphemy of this teaching, whereby the priest is instructed to affect to act as God, it here appears that *the Church of Rome teaches that a known lie is to be deliberately told by a minister of religion, and, if it be necessary to effect his object, that to this crime is to be added that of perjury.* Is not this "speaking lies in hypocrisy," and actually endeavouring under the name of religion to "sear the conscience" (1 Tim. iv. 2) of her priests. Here is another of the questions proposed by Dens—"When is it contrary to the Seal to make use of the knowledge of confession?" "When it is attended with danger lest

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devotions of the festival of a saint generally contain a prayer to be guided by his example and instructions, it will be edifying to learn what instructions and example is furnished by Saint Pius V.:—

"For the punishment of certain offences, he took advantage of the confessional, which ought to be an inviolable sanctuary. It has been already said that Montalto, whilst he was cardinal, under the pretence of zeal, piety, and Christian humility, affected the reputation, with his habitual hypocrisy, of being frequently in the confessional chair; and the prevalent idea of his being an excellent man, and of a plain and simple character, attracted a considerable number of penitents, and of those especially who were burdened with the gravest offences, either having for their object a great facility of absolution, or that believing and seeing him to be a man of retired habits, and not likely to live long, they had not the dread of having before their eyes one who was acquainted with the inmost recesses of their consciences. But they grievously misreckoned when they confessed to a person who adroitly took care to assure himself of name and surname, which he committed to his memorandum-book, probably with the intention of using the information at a fitting opportunity, as in fact he did; for no sooner was he made Pope than he gave to the governor of Rome a list of five persons, three men and two women, supplying him with the requisite particulars for finding them. He took care, however, not to mention that they had confessed to him, though he positively assured him of the grave offence which each had committed. . . . To these examples many others succeeded during the pontificate of Sixtus; and either as his memory suggested, or as he perused his

anything be revealed, directly or indirectly, respecting the confession of a known person. Nay, although no such danger appear, and it be not known that the confessor avails himself of the knowledge of confession, yet if it might turn out to be a real or apprehended grievance to the penitent or his accomplice, it would be acting contrary to the Seal, inasmuch as *Confession would thus be rendered odious*; for instance, if a confessor should, from the sole knowledge of Confession, deny a penitent or his accomplice a *testimonial of morals*." Thus, it appears, that though a priest may be perfectly well aware that a man is a thief, a murderer, and everything that is vile, he is bound by his Church to give that person a character—a *testimonial of morals*!—if he does not, he is breaking the Seal. The priest is taught, that it is better to say the man he knows to be a wicked man is a good man, thus incurring the curse of God—" *Woe to you that call evil good, and good evil*" (Isaiah, v. 20), than to break the Seal of the Confessional. And observe that the grand reason why this form of lying is inculcated on the priests of Rome is, lest "*Confession should become odious*." You can perceive that Dens means by this that, if you could not trust the priest to keep carefully concealed all the iniquity you might reveal to him, you might be inclined to cease going to Confession, which would be ruinous to the Church of Rome. You see, then, that it is not altogether on the moral principle of keeping the secret of the person confessing, it is more for fear the Church should suffer any loss—lest the Confessional should become odious—should fall into disgrace, and thus cease to be used. Delahogue, another great writer of your Church, thus speaks concerning the Seal of Confession:—"If a priest is questioned by a magistrate as to matters of which he has

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memorandum-book, he directed the apprehension of those whom he knew to be guilty, though by justice and in popular estimation they were regarded as respectable persons; whence the Governor sometimes looked on the Pope as a conjuror; . . . *but from time to time he summoned the confessors of the longest experience, and who were accustomed to draw the greatest concourse of penitents, and used his persuasions sometimes to one, sometimes to another, that since crimes of the deepest dye were often confessed to them, they could reveal the whole to him without any offence to their consciences . . . he giving them absolution for the whole; and many allowed themselves to be induced to do this, bringing, in this manner, many unhappy wretches to the gallows*" (Leti Listo Quinto, 1585, Part II., lib. iv., pp. 158, 161).

"The father of Diana [Duchesse of Valentinois] was John de Poitiers, Count de St. Valier. Having entered into the conspiracy of Charles of Bourbon, he mentioned the act in secret confession to a priest. The priest informed against him, and he was condemned to death" (Thuanus Hist. Sur Temp., liii. ad ann 1547).

Mr. Stephenson, who gained admission to the Inquisition at Lima, in Peru, when it was sacked, on the 3rd September, 1813, mentions that he carried to his house fifteen despatches of processes of little importance, and adds, that two of them had, in the first act of the process, *the denunciation of the accused by their own confessors* ("Francisco Moya; or, the Inquisition as it was in South America," by B. Vacuna Mackenna, p. 150).

learned at Confession alone, *he ought to reply, that he is ignorant of them; nay, he ought to swear it*; which he may do without any danger of falsehood." Here again you will observe that the priests are taught that it is a good action to tell a lie, and even to swear to it. What can you think of such a code of morals as this? The man who should act thus, not being a priest, would be stigmatised as a liar and a perjurer; yet this is the way in which the priest is taught by his Church to act. How is a conscientious priest to be pitied under such circumstances; if he obey the law of God (Col. iii. 9), he must disobey his Church, and incur "her heaviest chastisements." My opponent has told us (Jan. 10); that the priests have invariably chosen to preserve inviolate the Seal of Confession, *i.e.*, to obey men rather than God. Now, I ask, how can these men, a part of whose education consists in being thus taught to tell lies, and swear to them as a matter of religion, be fitted afterwards to train souls to that "*holiness without which no man shall see God*"? (Heb. xii. 14.) As I am anxious that you should not imagine that I have misrepresented the doctrines of your Church on this subject, I shall quote for you a part of the evidence given by Drs. Doyle and Magaurin, in the year 1825, before a Committee of the House of Commons. When Dr. Doyle was asked—"Would a priest think himself justified, in case he received in Confession a knowledge of an intended crime, to take any measure by which he could prevent the execution of that crime?" The following was Dr. Doyle's reply:—"No, he cannot, more than the means he uses with the individuals themselves." He was asked again—"Could he not warn the person against whom the crime is intended to be committed?" And he replied—"He cannot!!" Now I ask you to reflect upon this, when, I think, it will appear to you that the confessional is opposed to every law, both human and divine. Dr. Magaurin's evidence corroborated that of Dr. Doyle. When asked—"Supposing it (a murder) was stated to him in Confession, would the priest think it consistent with his duty to divulge any part of a communication which was made to him in confession?" he answered, "I do not think he would." When asked again, "Might he not disclose so much of it as would prevent the perpetration of the crime, without committing the person who had made the confession?" his answer to this was most decided—"He could not divulge any part of it." Thus you see that, according to the testimony of these two Roman-catholic bishops, a priest may be informed of the intention to commit a murder, and yet he is not at liberty to reveal it, even so far as to prevent the murder; and instances are recorded where the Seal of the Confessional has been unbroken by the priest, and the intended crime has been committed. Thus, when Ravallac stabbed Henry IV., Priest Aubigney, a French Jesuit, acknowledged that the assassin had, in Confession, told him of his intention to commit the murder, and even shown him the knife; although, when taken into examination, he denied that he knew anything of it, or that he could have discovered it, even if he had been willing to do so, because it had been communicated to him in Confession. The following were his hypocritical words:—

"God hath given me that peculiar grace, that as soon as anything is revealed to me in Confession, immediately I forget it."\* I leave you to form your own opinions as to whether or not this priest was, in the sight of God, an accomplice in the crime, when he knew of it, and did not warn the intended victim. Something of the same kind occurred at the time of the discovery of the Gunpowder Plot, when we hear that the Rev. Mr. Garnet, a Roman-catholic priest, though he knew of the formation of the conspiracy concealed it, and justified his concealment of it on the plea, that he had only known it through the Confessional. A circumstance of the same nature is related by the Rev. L. J. Nolan, formerly a Roman-catholic priest. In a pamphlet published in 1838, Mr. Nolan thus writes:—"During the last three years I discharged the duty of a Romish clergyman, my heart often shuddered at the idea of entering the confessional. The thoughts of the many crimes I had to hear, the growing doubt upon my mind that Confession was an erroneous doctrine—that it tended more to harden than to reclaim the heart; and that through it I should be instrumental in ministering destruction to your souls, were awful considerations to me in the hours of my reflection. The recital of the murderous acts I had often heard through this iniquitous tribunal had cost me many a restless night, and are still fixed with horror on my memory. But, my friends, the most awful consideration is this—that through the confessional I had frequently been apprised of intended assassinations and diabolical conspiracies, and still from the *ungodly injunctions of secrecy* in the Romish Creed, lest, as Peter Dens says, *the confessional should become odious*, I dared not give the slightest information to the marked-out victims of slaughter. But though my heart now trembles at the recollection of the murderous acts, still, duty obliges me to proceed and enumerate one or two instances of the cases alluded to. The first is the case of a person who was barbarously murdered, and with whose

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\* Our Homilies say:—"And, where they do allege the saying of our Saviour Jesus Christ unto the leper, to prove Auricular Confession to stand on God's Word, 'Go thy way, and show thyself unto the priest' (Matt. viii.), do they not see that the leper was cleansed from his leprosy before he was by Christ sent unto the priest to shew himself unto him! By the same reason we must be cleansed from our spiritual leprosy, I mean our sins must be forgiven us, before that we come to confession. What need we, then, to tell forth our sins into the ear of the priest, since that they are already taken away? Therefore the holy Ambrose, in his second sermon upon the 119th Psalm, doth say full well—'Go shew thyself unto the priest: who is the true Priest, but he who is Priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedech? Whereby this holy father doth understand, that, both the priesthood and the law being changed, *we ought to acknowledge none other priest for deliverance from our sins, but our Saviour Jesus Christ*, who, being Sovereign Bishop, doth with the sacrifice of his body and blood, offered once for ever upon the altar of the cross, most effectually cleanse the spiritual leprosy, and wash away the sins of all those that with true confession of the same do flee to him.'" ("Homily of the Church of Ireland on Repentance," p. 508).

“intended assassination I became acquainted at Confession. One of  
 “the five conspirators (all of whom were sworn to commit the horrid  
 “deed) broached to me the bloody conspiracy in the confessional. I  
 “implored him to desist from his intention of becoming an accom-  
 “plice in so diabolical a design, but alas ! all advice was useless ; no  
 “dissuasive could prevail—his determination was fixed : and *his only*  
 “*reason for disclosing* the awful machination to his confessor seemed  
 “to have originated from a *hope*, that his *wicked design would be hal-*  
 “*lowed* by his previous acknowledgement of it to *his priest*. Finding  
 “all my remonstrances unavailing, I then resorted to a stratagem.  
 “I earnestly besought him to mention the circumstance to me out of  
 “the confessional, in order that I might apprise the intended victim  
 “of his danger, or caution the conspirators against the committal of  
 “so inhuman a deed. But here ingenuity itself failed in arresting  
 “the career of his satanic obstinacy. The conspirator’s illegal oath,  
 “and his apprehension of himself becoming the victim of brutal  
 “assassination should he be known as the revealer of the conspiracy,  
 “rendered him inflexible to my entreaties ; and, awful to relate, a  
 “poor inoffensive man, the victim of slaughter, died a most cruel death  
 “by the hand of ruthless assassins. Oh, my dear Protestant country-  
 “men, you will naturally ask *whether am I or the perpetrators* of the  
 “bloody deed *most to be censured* ? I, who knew the murderers and  
 “the murdered previous to the act—I, who had met the intended  
 “victim of slaughter in the public streets but a short time antece-  
 “dent to his death. But, my friends, the prejudice of my early life  
 “in favour of the doctrine of Auricular Confession, and the influence  
 “of *subsequent education* instilling into my mind the *inviolability of that*  
 “*iniquitous tribunal*, must plead before my God and the public as my  
 “only apology for the concealment of this diabolical conspiracy.  
 “And now you, Romish priests, I ask you, Could the Lord Jesus  
 “institute a doctrine so monstrous in its practice, and so subversive  
 “of the principle of humanity—a doctrine that beholds the dagger  
 “pointed at the human heart, but hushes the warning voice that  
 “would advise the devoted victim of danger.” This gentleman  
 goes on to say—“I must now proceed with the recital of another  
 “case more revolting to humanity than even the former one. It is  
 “that of a female administering poison to her parent. The first  
 “attempt at parricide proved ineffectual, owing to an immediate  
 “retching that seized the parent after taking the draught. The  
 “perpetrator of this foul deed afterwards came to Confession, and  
 “acknowledged her guilt ; but *circumstances proved that she only*  
 “*sought for priestly absolution to ease her mind, and prepare her for a*  
 “*speedy repetition of her heinous crime*. Again she attempted the act,  
 “and it proved successful. I was called on to attend the dying  
 “parent. The unnatural throes and convulsive agonies of the unfor-  
 “tunate man convinced me that the disease was of no ordinary nature.  
 “The previous Confession of his daughter, who at this time made her  
 “appearance, rushed upon my mind and suggested that the parent  
 “was a second time poisoned. From what I had known through the

"confessional, I could not even hint at the propriety of sending for medical attendance, for the Romish doctrine impressed an inviolate secrecy upon my lips, and prevented my giving the slightest intimation of the malady; whilst the poor parent, unconscious of the cause of his death, died in the most excruciating agonies of which humanity can form any conception. Oh, monstrous system of Confession! will you dare any longer to ascribe your origin to the great Eternal, and thus affix to nature's God the blasphemy of your tenets? Oh thou iniquitous tribunal—thou cloaker of crimes—thou abettor of wickedness—thou brutal murderer—the child attempts the most diabolical act against a parent, but thou, by presuming to erase the past transgression, only encourages to a repetition of the crime. A parent suffers the most agonising tortures, and dies in the most excruciating pains, from poison administered by an unnatural daughter; but thou, polluted tribunal, will not allow the priest acquainted with the circumstance to disclose the cause of this heart-rending death. . . . But why need I refer to such circumstances, as every priest who has acted in the capacity of a confessor must admit the fact of similar cases frequently coming before him at the confessional" (Rev. L. J. Nolan, pages 18-21). I leave this subject to speak for itself, assured that any observation I could make to demonstrate the atrocity of such a system must be perfectly unnecessary.

I remain your sincere friend,

JOHN THOMAS WALLER.

Castletown Manor, Pallaskenry.

## The Bondage of the Confessional.

"By confession, in fact, so many families are immersed in poverty; because the grasping confessor, taking advantage of the weak moments of a dying man, has had the will made to the profit of the clergy, and facts of the kind may be reckoned by the million" (De Sanctis on Confession, p. 125).

ROMAN-CATHOLIC FRIENDS,—One of the leading doctrines taught by your Church is *the necessity of Auricular Confession to a priest*. It is a part of one of the Sacraments of Rome; and its practice is obligatory on every one living in the Romish communion.\* It would therefore seem to be a thing of the highest importance to Roman-

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\* "No less extraordinary are the proofs extracted by Roman theologians from the New Testament to demonstrate the Divine institution of Auricular Confession. In chap. iii., verses 5, 6, of the Gospel of St. Matthew, it is said of the people of Jerusalem, and of the region round about, went to John the Baptist, and were baptized, confessing their sins. To deduce from this passage the institution of confession, would be the same thing as deducing the temporal dominion of the Pope from the passage of St. John, chap. xviii., 'My kingdom

catholics that this doctrine should be amply supported by proofs from Holy Writ. Far from such being the case, however, when I stated that *Confession is not to be found in the Scriptures*, P. C. made no attempt to deny my statement; but, on the contrary, virtually admitted the truth of what I had said, by arguing that its not being in the Scriptures proves nothing against it; for (said he) Roman-catholics "*have other sources whence to draw their faith*" besides the Holy Scriptures; and he added, that by asking you to reject Confession because not found in the Scriptures, I was suggesting to you to take the Protestant Rule of Faith—*i.e.*, the Bible—as your Rule. The same fact, viz., the impossibility of proving the doctrine of Confession out of the Scriptures, he virtually admits, by refraining altogether from any appeal to Scripture on the subject, while he, at the same time, endeavours most strenuously to prove the doctrine from every other imaginable source; not disdaining even to support the doctrine of Confession from the practices of heathen nations. "It has been found (he says) with the Brahmins, the Turks, in Thibet, Japan, and even with the people of America." The heathens Seneca and Socrates admired it—in fact *the heathen* of all ages have practised it—and "it is upon these natural and universal bases that Christianity has established the supernatural theory of sacramental confession." Thus has my opponent traced for you the origin of the doctrine of Auricular Confession not to the Bible—but to the customs of *heathen* nations; as he did also with respect to the Mass, and (as I hope to show you some day) others of your doctrines also.

In treating of what Romanist divines call the "Seal of the Confessional," I had quoted a passage from Dens, a book out of which the priests are instructed as to the manner in which this "Seal" is to be observed. One of the cases laid down by this standard author of Rome, which would be an infraction of this Seal, is: "If a confessor should, from the sole knowledge of confession, deny a penitent or his accomplice *a testimonial of morals*." This, I doubt not, appeared to you to be highly inconsistent with truth; for if the confessor *know* the man to be dishonest, no matter in what way he acquired that knowledge, you might naturally think that he would be uttering a falsehood if he should give this man a good character; but—not at all, says my opponent; for "the testimonial may be worded as the confessor

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is not of this world.' The worthy Bellarmine did not observe, or pretended not to observe, the absurd consequences that followed from his arguments. Let us assume that in this place an allusion to confession is intended. It would legitimately ensue that confession was not necessarily to be made to *a priest*, for *St. John was none*; it would legitimately ensue that it ought to be made in public, not in private; that it ought to be made solely in the act of receiving baptism; that the *Council of Trent* had erred, when it is said that *Jesus Christ instituted confession after His resurrection*; when it is said that it was instituted for sins committed after baptism; and a hundred other consequences not less absurd" ("Confession," by L. De Sanctis, appointed by Pope Gregory XVI., Qualifier of the Supreme Holy Inquisition, p. 10).

pleases"—that is, he must, indeed, make a pretence of giving the man a good character, *lest "confession be rendered odious;"* but, still, he may save himself from untruthfulness, if he be clever enough to find words capable of a *double interpretation*, by adopting some of the plans of the *saintly* Liguori. This "Saint" has given us many examples of the way in which falsehoods may, with a little ingenuity, be made to pass for truth. For instance, he asks:—"Can an adulteress deny adultery to her husband?" and the answer he gives is—"She can reply, '*I am innocent of this crime;*'" and here is the manner in which she is to justify the lie—"because by confession it is taken away" (St. Alphonsus de Liguori, Theol. Moral., Lib. iii., Tract ii. De Juramento). Thus you see how seasonably Liguori comes to the aid of Dens, in endeavouring to subvert truth and holiness. From all this we may arrive at the conclusion that a character given by a priest is not worth a straw; for though he know the man to be a thief, a liar, or a murderer, he is bound by his church to give him a character, lest he should incur the guilt of breaking the Seal; against the infraction of which the Church of Rome has "denounced her heaviest chastisements" (Catech. Con. Trid.). Very different, indeed, from this iniquitous law is the recommendation given by the Protestant Church (to which my opponent alludes) to clergymen not to disclose secrets which have been communicated to them in confidence. This is a course which his own common sense ought to suggest to any clergyman; and this kind of laudable secrecy is of course, as he says, observed by lawyers, surgeons, and others. But this is vastly different from being, as the Romish priest is, bound by an oath not to reveal any secret confessed to him, even though his revealing it should be the means of saving life; and still worse, being directed as the priest of Rome is, if asked concerning these secrets, to deny that he knows them, and even to swear that *he does not*. I say again, and I say it advisedly, that thus to *inculcate lying and perjury on the young men who are under training for the priesthood, must be displeasing to God, and subversive of the first principles of holiness.*

I have shown you from your own writer, Dens, the reason your church has for decreeing that this secrecy should be so strictly observed, which is, "*lest confession should be rendered odious;*" by which is meant, as I explained to you, that, unless the priests were under an impossibility of revealing the secrets which they learn in the confessional, the probability is that this tribunal would soon become neglected, and the practice of confession fall into disuse. This would be a most grievous misfortune—in fact I may say, it would give a death-blow to the Church of Rome; for, if private sacramental confession ceased to be practised, the priests would no longer have any means of keeping the minds and consciences of men entirely under their sway, and the people being thus let out of their leading-strings, freedom of opinion would begin to have play, and then the whole system of Rome, now chiefly upheld by the iron bondage which the confessional enables the priests to exercise, would shortly be a thing of the past. Wisely, indeed, therefore, has the Church of Rome

claimed for her priests the high prerogative of sitting "in the tribunal of penance as the legitimate judge" of the penitent, and declared that "the priest represents the character and discharges the office of Jesus Christ"; and justly has the Catechism of the Council of Trent defined the power which this doctrine of judicial absolution puts into the hands of the priesthood, saying—"Therefore they (the priests) are justly called not only angels but gods, because *they possess amongst us the strength and power* of the immortal God." The Church of Rome seeks to vest the power and authority of God in her priests; and it is this assumption by the priests of a supreme and absolute authority over the laity to which we (Protestants) object. It is not ordained of God, and is a thing incompatible with the liberty and independence of the laity.\* Laymen must surrender themselves—their thoughts, words, and actions—to the direction of the confessor, and woe to him who dares to think for himself! The confessor thus becomes the entire ruler of his penitent; and not only the ruler of the penitent himself, and the dictator of the term of salvation *to him*, but also the director of his family concerns. For what can be greater than the influence exercised upon families by a person who has the power to become thus intimately acquainted with all the secrets of the household. Although even only one member of a family should be in the habit of attending the confessional—although even only a servant—that one person may communicate information sufficient to enable the confessor to exercise a powerful influence over the affairs of the family. The priest is the confidant of the inmost thoughts of each one of his penitents, and the inquisitorial confession which he is authorised to require, enables him to rule—body and soul—the penitent, his wife, his children, and his servants; and this power the priests of the Church of Rome have never been slow to turn to account for the advancement of "The Church." Numerous are the examples which

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\* "It is evident that the Church of Rome, in teaching this vile doctrine, *aims only at her own interest and advantage*, and hath no regard at all to the honour of God and the good of souls. It is absolutely necessary, she saith, for a sinner to make an auricular confession to, and be absolved by a priest, *though God hath no where said so*; but it is not necessary for him to be contrite, or to repent of his sins out of the love of God, though God Himself in His own Word hath a hundred times said it is. That is necessary for the honour and gain of the priest. The *trade* of Auricular Confession must by all means be kept up, because from thence *they reap no small gain*: and besides, by it *they govern* not only silly, common people, but great men, and kings, and princes, by becoming masters of their secrets. But is not the doctrine of true contrition as necessary for the honour of God? Yes; but the promoting of God's glory in the salvation of souls, is the least of their design or business. Indeed, it were easy to show how the whole frame of religion and doctrine of the Church of Rome, as it is distinguished from that of Christianity, which we hold in common with them, is evidently designed and contrived to serve the interest and profit of them that rule that Church, by the disservices, yea, and ruin of those souls that are under their government" (Bishop Bull's Sermons. The Necessity of Works of Righteousness).

the practical working of this system supplies of the entire conquest of the clergy over the liberties of the laity ; who live in a state of spiritual bondage to a priest not less severe than that endured by the literal slaves under their taskmasters. The doctrine of Confession has a tendency to make people believe that their salvation or ruin is in the power of the priest—that, in fact, he is in the place of God ; and the effect of this belief is to lead men to think little of confessing their sins to *God*, and a great deal of confessing them to *the priest*, thus virtually exalting the priest above God himself ; for he has it in his power, they think, to provide a means of salvation for those who are unfit to be saved in the way God has appointed ; and thus people say to themselves that, as they cannot hope to attain to perfect contrition, they must place all their hopes of forgiveness in the intervention of the priest. But, besides this, the Romish confessional also subverts the liberty of the Gospel. The Gospel of God proclaims to men that *all who believe in the finished work of Jesus* for them shall obtain free forgiveness of all their sins. Thus we read (Acts xiii. 38) —“ *Be it known therefore to you, men brethren, that THROUGH HIM FORGIVENESS OF SINS IS PREACHED to you : And from all the things, from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses. In HIM EVERY ONE THAT BELIEVETH IS JUSTIFIED.*” This is the plan laid down by the Almighty for the saving of man—He has interposed no barrier between the sinner and his Saviour. Through Jesus the most unworthy penitent can go\* “ *with confidence to the throne of grace ; that he may obtain mercy and find grace in seasonable aid* ”—(Heb. iv. 16). The Romish system, on the other hand, thrusts in the priest between the penitent sinner and his Saviour. It is the will of God that neither man, nor angel, nor archangel should dare to interpose any barrier between Jesus and the souls He has died to save. How, then, can the Church of Rome *presume* thus to interfere, and make all the sinner’s hope of pardon to depend on his confessing to a priest, and getting absolution from him?—how could the Council of Trent presume to decree that even where true repentance exists, forgiveness

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\* Facts.—“ Jesus Christ *forgave* the sins of many *without hearing their confessions*, and without sending them to the Apostles to confess. The paralytic obtained the forgiveness of his sins from Jesus Christ, solely by faith, without confession of any kind (Matt. ii. 5) ; the woman who was a sinner (Luke vii. 47-50) obtained forgiveness of her many sins from Jesus Christ without any confession ; and Jesus said, on that occasion, that she was saved, not by confession, but by faith and love. Zacchæus did anything but confess his faults in order to procure forgiveness : he rather defended himself (Luke xix.), and obtained the pardon of his sins from the Redeemer, because he believed in him. Peter, without confession, received the pardon of his most grievous sin with a single look of the Lord (Luke xxii. 61). Paul, the persecutor, obtained the remission of his sins without confession ; and if he was referred to the disciple Ananias (Acts ix.), it was that he might receive his sight. Let a single instance be cited in the New Testament in which Auricular Confession is imposed as an indispensable condition for receiving remission of sins, and we will acknowledge ourselves beaten ” (Desanctis, 24).

cannot be obtained from God, unless there be at least *a desire for the sacrament of penance*—thus, in order to exalt the church and the priesthood, making the mercy of God and His forgiveness contingent, not on dependence on God's promise to forgive the repentant sinner, but on a desire to act in obedience *to the Church of Rome*. It is an unwarrantable assumption thus to declare God's grace to be dependant on any ordinance of mere human creation; and it is easy to conclude what immense power is, by this notion, thrown into the hands of the priesthood. This power has often been, and still often is, wielded in the most arbitrary way; and the Romish Ecclesiastics think little of the life, or even of the salvation, of an individual, when it interferes with their own ends. The following incident will give you an example of this:—"In 1850, the King of Sardinia passed the Siccardi laws, which decreed, amongst other things, that the clergy should be subject to the same Courts of Law as the laity. Soon afterwards, the Count Santa Rosa, one of the Ministers of State who had been instrumental in passing this law, being dangerously ill, applied for the 'last rites of his Church.' These were refused to him on the plea that the Archbishop of Turin had previously declared excommunicated all who had any share in passing this law. The priest who was sent to him set before him, as the condition on which he would give him absolution, that he should condemn what he had done with respect to this law. This Count Santa Rosa could not do, for he had done nothing wrong; the advice he had given to the king was what he had conscientiously believed it his duty to give, and he knew he had not broken any law of God, or done anything which would prevent his obtaining the forgiveness of God. He accordingly refused to condemn, or pretend to condemn, his just action; but he consented to sign a document acknowledging that he had taken a share in the acts of the Government only as a public man, and that he had received the sanction from his confessor for what he had done. This document was sent to the Archbishop, who refused to receive it. The dying Count's own confessor then interfered, and prevailed upon him to sign a declaration saying that, if he had done anything against the Church, it was through ignorance, and that he submitted himself to the Church and to the Pope. The Archbishop still remained inexorable, and sent his curate to the bed of the dying man, who told him that, if he did not make a retractation in the very terms now prescribed by the Archbishop, he should not receive the 'last rites of the Church,' nor be buried in consecrated ground.\* Having delivered

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\* The following describe its tyranny in Italy:—"If every true-born Italian, man, woman, and child, within the Pope's dominions, does not confess and receive the communion at least once a-year, he is exhorted, entreated, and otherwise tormented; and if he persists in his contumacy, he is excommunicated, which is a very good joke to us, but not at all to an Italian, since it involves the loss of civil rights, and, perhaps, of liberty and property" (Rome in the Nineteenth Century, ii. 262).

Again:—"Every Italian must at this time confess and receive communion,

his message, this priest seated himself on a sofa to watch the death of the Count. The doctor entreated the priest to absolve the dying man; the Countess Santa Rosa threw herself at his feet and, in floods of tears, implored him to show mercy on her husband. All was unavailing. The priest declared that he had received peremptory orders: and he seemed to feel no pain in obeying them. Count Santa Rosa died. He was refused Christian burial; and great was the grief of his relations at his having died without the absolution of the priest, as they were under the delusive impression that he was thus debarred from the hopes of heaven, though his virtues had endeared him to all who knew him, his only fault in the eyes of the Church having been that he had endeavoured, as his duty to his country required of him, to stem the torrent of priestly arrogance and assumption. Thus does the Church of Rome turn the confessional into a monstrous engine for enslaving the bodies and minds of her votaries.

I remain your sincere friend,

JOHN THOMAS WALLER.

Castletown Manor, Pallaskenry.

## The Slavery of the Confessional.

ROMAN-CATHOLIC FRIENDS,—In my last letter on Confession, I endeavoured to show you that the tribunal of the confessional is a monstrous engine in the hands of the Romish priests, enabling them to rule with almost despotic sway the minds and consciences of men, as well as to keep under their control even the *temporal* liberty and independence of the laity. The power thus usurped by the priests of Rome has been frequently wielded by them in the most arbitrary manner, and the superstitious reverence attached by Roman-catholics to the confessional has been often made use of, not as a means of promoting the souls' good of their deluded penitents, but as a tool for the advancement of their own interests, or those of "The Church." To illustrate this, I think you will find the following document inte-

A friend of ours who has lived a good deal in foreign countries, and there imbibed his form of unbelief in Catholicism, went to-day to confession with the strongest repugnance. 'What am I to do?' he said. 'If I neglect it, I am reprimanded by the parish priest; if I delay it, my name is posted up in the parish church; if I persist in my contumacy, the arm of the Church will overtake me, and my rank and my fortune only serve to make me more obnoxious to its power. If I chose to make myself a martyr, and to suffer the extremity of punishment in the loss of property and personal rights, what is to become of my wife and family? The same ruin would overtake them, though they are Catholics; for I am obliged not only to conceal my true belief, and profess what I despise, but I must bring up my children in their abominable idolatries and superstition; or, if I teach them the truth, make them hypocrites or beggars' ("Rome in the Nineteenth Century," iii., p. 160).

resting, as showing the manner in which a penitent, although a king, was, by means of this tribunal, kept completely under the dominion of a priest. It is a letter from a priest of the name of La Chaise, confessor to Louis XIV., to another priest in England, called Father Petre, confessor to James II. of England. It is found in the seventh volume (4to.) of the collection of manuscript papers selected from the library of Edward Harley, Earl of Oxford, and is as follows:—

*“Father La Chaise’s project for the extirpation of Heretics, in a Letter from him to Father Petre. 1668.*

“WORTHY FRIEND,—I received yours on the 20th of June last, and am glad to hear of your good success, and that our party gains ground so fast in England; but concerning the question you have put to me, that is, ‘What is the best course to be taken to root out all heretics?’ To this I answer, there are divers ways to do that, but we must consider which is the best to make use of in England. I am sure you are not ignorant of how many thousand heretics we have in France, *by the power of our dragoons*, converted in the space of one year; and by the doctrine of those *booted Apostles* turned more in one month *than Christ and His Apostles* could in ten years. This is a most excellent method, and far excels those of the great preachers and teachers that have lived since Christ’s time. But I have spoken with divers fathers of our Society, who do not think that your king is strong enough to accomplish his design by such kind of force, so that we cannot expect to have our work done in that manner, for the heretics are too strong in the three kingdoms, and therefore we must seek to convert them by fair means, before we fall upon them with fire, sword, halter, gaols, and other such like punishments; and therefore I can give you no better advice than to begin with soft, easy means. Wheedle them by promises of profit and places of honour, till you have made them dip themselves in treasonable actions against the laws established, and then they are bound to serve from fear. When they have done this”—mark the duplicity of this—“turn them out and serve others so, by putting them in their places; and by this way gain as many as you can. And for the heretics that are in places of profit and honour, turn them out or suspend them on pretence of misbehaviour; by which their places are forfeited, and they subject to what judgment you please to give them. Then you must form a camp, that must consist of none but Catholics; this will make the heretics heartless, and conclude all means of relief and recovery is gone. And, lastly, take the short and the best way, which is, to surprise the heretics on a sudden; and, to encourage the zealous Catholics, let them *sacrifice* them all, and *wash their hands in their blood, which will be an acceptable offering to God.*” The directions given by this “holy man” show us how we should be treated, should the day ever come when the Church of Rome should be able to do as she pleases. The priest goes on:—“And this was the method I took in France, which hath well, you see, succeeded; but it cost me many threats and promises before I could bring it thus far, our king being a long time very unwilling. But at last I got him

on the hip; for he had lain with his daughter-in-law, for which I would by no means give him absolution till he had given me an instrument, under his own hand and seal, to sacrifice all the heretics in one day." Now observe that this king had committed a sin, for which sin he requested absolution from the priest.\* This absolution you see was denied him, and why? Was it because the sin was so great that it was unpardonable? Was it because the priest conscientiously considered that, standing in the place of God, he ought not to grant pardon for so heinous a crime? No such thing—the *absolution was denied merely in order to accomplish the priest's purpose*. Far from feeling any sorrow for the king's having fallen so grievously, the confessor seems to tell of the sin of his royal penitent with a feeling approaching to pleasure, knowing full well that it would throw the king into his power, and thus give him an opportunity to work out his designs. The confessor proceeds—"Now, as soon as I had my desired commission, I appointed the day when this should be done; and, in the meantime, made ready some thousands of letters, to be sent into all parts of France in one post-night. I was never better pleased than at that time! but the king was affected with *some compassion for the Huguenots*, because they had been a means to bring him to his crown and throne; and the longer he was under it the more sorrowful he was, oft complaining, and desiring me to give him his commission again; but that I would by no persuasion do, advising him to repent of that heinous sin, and also telling him that *the trouble and horror of his spirit did not proceed from anything of evil in those things that were to be done, but from the wickedness that he had done.*"† The confessor told

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\* "A man may be imprisoned by any one of at least five different authorities, perhaps even without knowing why. Does he eat a cutlet, instead of a mackerel, on a Friday?—the curate or the rural vicar may, and in the small hours does: send him to prison. Does he miss going to the confessional at Easter?—his name is posted up outside the church-door, and the priest may, and often does, send him to prison. Does he take a fancy to read a book which the priests have declared he ought not to read—he may be imprisoned, and generally is, either by the parson, the vicar, or the inquisitor. Does he love and design to marry?—if any of these reverend gentlemen happen to be smitten with the bright eyes of his intended, he is forbidden to visit her, on the pretext it might raise a scandal, and, should he disobey, he may be thrown into prison. For all these, and many other causes, a man may be sent to the ecclesiastical prison by the Church authorities, and this without being interrogated, without knowing either accuser or witness, and often ignorant of the nature of the accusation" (Nicholini's History of the Pontificate of Pius IX., p. 50).

† Dr. Magee, Bishop of Peterborough, on confession to a priest:—"I will take it for granted that the confessors are men of superhuman sanctity, and that they will go into the confessional, and afterwards leave it, as pure as angels; still the result on the penitent must necessarily be deadly. He must lay bare his secret soul before the priest, who must ask him questions according to his suspicions of any concealed sin. He professes to put the questions prudently and cautiously, certainly, but what if he mistakes, and the thing has

the king that his sorrow proceeded *from the sin he had committed*, though he knew and had just acknowledged that it proceeded from "*compassion for the Huguenots*," whom he was about to murder. The priest considered it no crime to tell his penitent *this lie* at the solemn time of confession. And you will see that he further told him that the deliberate murder of the Protestants in his kingdom "would be a perfect atonement for his sin." The letter proceeds—"And that he must resolve to undergo the severe burden of a troubled mind for one of them or the other; and if he would remain satisfied as it was, his sin being forgiven, there would in a few days be a *perfect atonement* made *for it*, and he be *perfectly reconciled to God again*. But all this would not pacify him; for the longer, the more restless; and I therefore ordered him to retire to his closet, and spend his time constantly in prayer, without permitting any one to interrupt him; and this was in the morning early, when, the evening following, I was to send away

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never entered the mind of the penitent, is it not clear that *the priest has taught him a new sin, and impressed on his mind stains of vice which he never may efface?* . . . I maintain, that taking God's place without God's attributes, it is impossible, however prudent the priest may be, to avoid *instilling vice by the confessional*. God has not given to him His attribute of searching hearts; how then can he see where in the heart of his penitent purity and impurity, knowledge and ignorance, meet so as to be quite certain that his questions teach no new sin. He must question according to his suspicions; but from whence does he obtain his suspicions? From his knowledge of the most abandoned of the inhabitants of his parish. His questions to young children are founded upon the impurity that he might have heard of from such persons: and more than that, he has to consult the volumes of the Romish casuists . . . in which confessor after confessor has recorded his experience, until they form together *a museum of spiritual iniquity at which fiends may shudder and blush; where murderers may learn cruelty; where hoary-headed convicts may be taught fraud; and satyrs impurity.* . . .

"Now look at the consequences of this system. There comes to the knees of that confessor a female child of tender age. She repeats to him such things as she knows to be sin. He questions her. Running over in his mind all this *infernal catechism of iniquity*, he must prudently, cautiously, and carefully select a question, and put it. This poor usurper of God's privileges and powers may well tremble as he asks that question, *lest he should insinuate vice into that young heart and conscience*. For we read in a book written by the author of Conscience, that there was One who took little children in His arms and blessed them, who denounced woe against him by whom one of those little ones should perish. It would be better for that man that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and be thrown into the depths of the sea.

"I denounce the system as an outrage on decency and common sense, as well as on God's Word, which allows an innocent child to have her feelings lacerated, her conscience defiled by coarse hands that have been dabbling in all conceivable filth.

"This is not a matter in which the confessor merely is involved. It is a matter of indifference whether those abominable questions be put with the reluctant horror of a saint, or with the prurient curiosity of a sinner. The effects upon the miserable victim are the same. . . ."

all my letters. I did, indeed, make the more haste, for fear he should disclose it to anybody, yet I had given him strict charge to keep it to himself; and the very things, that I most feared, to my great sorrow, came to pass; for, just in the nick of time, the devil, who hath at all times instruments at work, sent the Prince of Condé to the court, who asked for the king. He was told he was in his closet, and would speak with no man. He impudently answered, 'that he must and would speak with him,' and so went directly to his closet. He being a great peer no man durst hinder him. And, being come to the king, he soon perceived by his countenance that he was under some great trouble of mind; for he seemed as if he were going into the other world immediately. 'Sire,' said he, 'what is the matter with you?' The king at first refused to tell him, but he pressing harder upon him, at last the king, with a sorrowful complaint, burst out and said, 'I have given La Chaise a commission under my hand to murder all the Huguenots in one day; and this evening will the letters be despatched to all parts by post for the performing of it; so that there is but small time left for my Huguenot subjects to live, who have never done me any harm.' Whereupon this cursed rogue answered, 'Let him give you your commission again.' The king said, 'How shall I get it out of his hand? for if I send to him for it he will refuse to send it.' This devil answered, 'If your Majesty will give me the order, I will quickly make him return it.' The king was soon persuaded, being willing to give ease to his troubled spirit, and said, 'Well, go then, and break his neck if he will not give it you.' Whereupon this son of the devil went to the post-house, and asked if I had not a great number of letters there. And they said, 'Yes, more than I had sent in a whole year before.' 'Then,' said the prince, 'by order from the king, you must deliver them all to me'—which they durst not deny, for they knew well enough who he was. And no sooner was he got into the post-house, and had asked these questions, but I came also in after him, to give order to the postmaster to give notice to all those under him in the several parts of the kingdom, that they should take care to deliver my letters with all imaginable speed. But I was no sooner entered the house but he gave his servants orders to secure the door, and said confidently to me, 'You must, by order from the king, give me the commission which you have forced from him.' I told him I had it not about me—mark this, he said he *had* not the warrant with him—"but would go and fetch it, *thinking to get from him*, and so go out of town, and to send the contents of those letters another time; but he said, 'You must give it; and if you have it not about you, send somebody to fetch it, or else never expect to go alive out of my hands; for I have an order from the king, either to bring it or break your neck, and am resolved either to carry that back to him in my hand or else your heart's blood at the point of my sword.' I would have made my escape, but he set his sword to my breast, and said, 'You must give it to me or die; therefore, deliver it, or else this goes through your body.'

*"So, when I saw nothing else would do, I put my hand in my pocket*

and gave it him." You see the priest had the commission in his pocket, although for the good of "The Church," he thought it right to say he had *not* got it, thus telling a deliberate lie. "Which" (the warrant) "he carried immediately to the king, and gave him that and all my letters, which they burned. And, being all done, the king said, now his heart was at ease. Now, how he should be eased by the devil, or so well satisfied with a false joy, I cannot tell; but this I know, that it was a very wicked and ungodly action, as well in his majesty as the Prince of Condé, and did not a little increase the burden and danger of his majesty's sins. I soon gave an account of this affair to several fathers of our Society, who promised to *do their best to prevent the aforesaid prince's doing such another act*, which was accordingly done; for *within six days after the damned action he was poisoned*, and well he deserved it." I leave you to draw your own conclusions as to whether or not this unfortunate prince was poisoned by these Jesuits. The manuscript proceeds—"The king also did suffer too, but in another fashion, for disclosing the design unto the prince, and hearkening unto his counsel. And many a time since, *when I have had him at confession*, I HAVE SHOOK HELL ABOUT HIS EARS AND MADE HIM SIGH, FEAR, AND TREMBLE BEFORE I WOULD GIVE HIM ABSOLUTION; nay, *more than that, I have made him to beg for it on his knees, before I would consent to absolve him*. By this I saw that he had still an inclination to me, and was willing to be under my government; so I set the business of the action before him, by telling him the whole story, and how wicked it was, and that it could not be forgiven till he had done some *good action* to balance that and *expiate his crime*. Whereupon he at last asked me what he must do. I told him that he must root out all heretics from his kingdom. So, when he saw there was no rest for him without doing it, he did again give them all into the power of me and our clergy, under this condition, that we would not murder them, as he had before given orders, but that we should, by fair means or force, convert them to the Catholic religion. Now, when we had got the commission, we presently put it in practice; and what the issue hath been you very well know. But now in England the work cannot be done after this manner, as you may perceive by what I have said to you; so that I cannot give you better counsel than to take that course in hand wherein we were so unhappily prevented: and I doubt not but it may have better success with you than with us.

"I would write to you of many other things, but I fear I have already detained you too long; wherefore I will write no more at present, but that I am your friend and servant,

"LA CHAISE.

"Paris, July 8, 1688."

I have given you this letter in full, as I think it will explain more aptly than any words of mine could do, the degree of tyranny practised by the priests in the Confessional. Because this king had thwarted the designs of this intriguing priest, therefore, "when he had him at

confession, he many a time *shook hell about his ears*, and made him sigh, fear, and tremble before he would give him absolution," and, though the king "begged for it on his knees," he would not fully absolve him till he had extorted from him all he required. The king, perhaps, thought that in thus urging him to "expiate his crime," by doing some good action, his confessor was actuated by no other feeling than a desire to promote his soul's welfare; whereas, on the contrary, the priest was only using the influence thrown into his hands by his supposed power of giving or withholding absolution, to accomplish his own ends. What thralldom could be more complete than that in which this poor king was held by the priest! We can compassionate the literal slave, whose master wheels the lash over his head; but is not he whose spiritual master has power thus to "shake hell about his ears, and make him sigh, fear, and tremble," really more to be pitied?

I remain your sincere friend,

JOHN THOMAS WALLER.

Castletown Manor, Pallaskenry.

## The Uncertainty of the Confessional.

"I would rather see the Church of England perish than the habitual Auricular Confession sanctioned in our pale" (Ryle, *Record* Newspaper, July 2, 1873).

ROMAN-CATHOLIC FRIENDS,—One of the grand advantages which Roman-catholic advocates usually pretend to find in confession to a priest is that it gives, they say, a greater security of pardon than can be attained to without it, and is thus a means of much spiritual help and comfort to Christians. This, indeed, *seems* a good thing; and, if it could be *proved*, it might weigh in favour of confession; that is, so far as to show it to be a wise ordinance of *man*; though, even then, it could never be proved to be a *divine* ordinance.\* If, however, it

\* "From the fourth Lateran Council downwards you will find in all the Lives of the Saints the practice of Auricular Confession repeated to satiety; you will see that these saints, especially at the approach of death, confessed every day, and even several times a-day (Benrath, *Life of B. Ochino*, ch. iii., p. 87); whilst in the Lives of the Saints previous to that Council, confession is never named. Let us open the celebrated 'Lives of the Holy Fathers in the Desert.' *St. Paul, the first hermit*, remained in the desert for about ninety years, and saw no one; at the point of death he saw St. Anthony, but did not confess to him, not only because the story does not mention it, but because St. Anthony was a layman; therefore, for ninety years he never confessed, and died without confession. *Mary of Egypt*, a most notorious sinner, went to the desert, and lived there many years without seeing a living soul. At the approach of death, says the history, God sent to her St. Zozimus, a priest, to give her the Holy Communion, and he administered it without confessing her. Therefore, she also was

appears that Romanists have no ground for the pretence that confession does really give a greater security of pardon, but that on the contrary it is only an unsafe and deceitful mode of administering consolation, then, any one who values his soul is bound to reject a false peace, founded—not on the promises of God, but only on a delusion. It shall be my aim to-day to show you that the practice of confession *does not* give any rational assurance of pardon to Roman-catholics—that in order to be sure of their pardon and acceptance with God, they must proceed on the very same plan which a Protestant must adopt—and that, instead of being profitted by confession, they are hindered from proceeding in the only safe way, by the delusive idea that they have obtained peace and safety through the medium of the Sacrament of Penance. First, then, even according to your own Church, the priest's absolution is of no value *unless the person who confesses be truly penitent*; therefore, no person can apply to himself the absolution of the priest, or feel assured that he has been really absolved by it, unless he be quite certain that he is sincerely penitent. Who, then, is to judge of the sincerity of his repentance? Is it the man himself, or the priest? How can the priest judge of it, except he be gifted with a power to see the heart?

On this subject I showed you, in one of my former letters, that it was a great omission on the part of the Church of Rome, that when she went about claiming for her priests *one* prerogative of the Almighty, viz. : \* that of forgiving sins, she did not also claim for them

a saint without confessing her sins, grievous as they were, though she had an opportunity of doing so. In like manner, not to be diffuse, of no one of these hermits is it recorded that he ever confessed; therefore, Confession was not yet in use. Pontius writes the life of St. Cyprian, bishop of Carthage, with the greatest minuteness of detail; and yet, while he relates the whole of his episcopal occupations, never does he say that he attended to hearing the confessions of the faithful. St. Cyprian died under the sentence of excommunication, pronounced against him by Pope Stephen; it was, therefore, necessary for his salvation, according to the principles of the Roman Church, that he should have confessed and received absolution. Had Cyprian done so, his historian would not have failed to relate it; yet not a word have we from Pontius referring, in the most remote degree, to the confession of Cyprian. Neither, therefore, did Cyprian receive the confessions of others, nor confess himself to a priest. *Gregory*, of Nyssa, writes the life of *St. Gregory*, bishop of Neocæsarea, with the greatest possible exactitude; he describes his actions most minutely; and never do we find the bishop engaged in listening to the confessions of others, or in making his own to a priest—not even at the point of death. *Gregory*, of Nazæanzum, observes the same silence in composing the biography of the bishops *Athanasius* and *Basil*. *Paulinus*, bishop of Nola, is equally silent in the life of his master, *St. Ambrose*," &c., &c. (*Desanctis Confession*, 49).

\* Convocation on Confession in the Church of England:—"The following report of the Committee of the Upper House of Convocation of the Province of Canterbury, being a Committee of the whole House, appointed on the 9th of May last, to consider and report on the teaching of the Church of England on the subject of Confession, was yesterday laid on the table by his Grace the

another of the attributes of God, *i.e.*, a power to read the heart. She might possibly have carried her arrogant assumptions even as far as this, but that inconvenience might arise to her from the fact, that the possession of *this* power by the priests could be more easily be tested than that of forgiving sins can be. It must then rest with the man himself to judge of the sincerity of his repentance—*he alone must decide* whether or not he possesses that first and most important condition towards obtaining available absolution. If, then, it happen that the man be forced to decide that he is wanting in this first requisite towards obtaining pardon, it will be useless for him to go to the priest for that pardon which, confessedly, he cannot bestow; if, on the other hand, the man feels assured that *he does possess genuine repentance*, he is at once, even according to your own Church, accepted with God; what need, then, of going to a priest to ask for the pardon which he has already obtained from the Almighty Himself? How clearly St. Augustine speaks on this point, when explaining the words of David, 'I said I will confess against myself my injustice to the

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Archbishop:—'In the matter of confession, the Church of England holds fast those principles which are set forth in Holy Scripture, which were affirmed by the Primitive Church, and which were re-affirmed by the English Reformation. *The Church of England, in the 25th Article, affirms that Penance is not to be counted a sacrament of the Gospel; and, as judged by her formularies, KNOWS NO SUCH WORDS AS "SACRAMENTAL CONFESSIONS."* Grounding her doctrines on Holy Scripture, *she distinctly declares THE FULL AND ENTIRE FORGIVENESS OF SINS, THROUGH THE BLOOD OF JESUS CHRIST, to those who bewail their own sinfulness, and confess themselves to Almighty God, with full purpose of amendment of life, and turn with true faith unto Him.* It is the desire of the Church that by this way and means all her children should find peace. In this spirit the forms of Confession and Absolution are set forth in her public Services. Yet, for the relief of troubled consciences, she has made special provision in two exceptional cases. (1). In the case of those who cannot quiet their own consciences previous to receiving the Holy Communion, but require further *comfort and counsel*, the minister is directed to say, 'Let him come to me, or to some other discreet and learned minister of God's Word, and open his grief, that by the ministry of God's Holy Word he may receive the benefit of absolution, together with ghostly counsel and advice.' Nevertheless, it is to be noted that *for such a case no form of absolution has been prescribed in the Book of Common Prayer; and further, that the Rubric in the first Prayer Book of 1549, which sanctions a particular form of absolution, has been withdrawn from all subsequent editions of said book.* (2). In the Order of the Visitation of the Sick, it is directed, that the sick man be moved to make a special confession of his sins, if he feel his conscience troubled with any weighty matter, but in such case absolution is to be given when the sick man shall humbly and heartily desire it. *The special provision, however, does not authorise the ministers of the Church TO REQUIRE from any who may repair to them to open their griefs in a particular or detailed examination of all their sins, or to require private confession as a condition previous to receiving the Holy Communion, or to enjoin or even encourage any practice of habitual confession to a priest*" (The Times, July 24, 1873).

Lord : and thou hast forgiven the wickedness of my sin." He says that here "forgiveness was promised by God even before any confession was really made ; but directly upon the *intention* to do so arising in the mind, I said, I *will* confess my sins. His confession was not yet come to his mouth, yet God heard the voice of his heart " (Augustine in Psalm xxxii.).

I shall show you further that confession does not confer any real security of pardon, from the fact that Roman-catholics are only bound to confess mortal sins—not venial. With regard to their venial sins, therefore, they must be always in a state of doubt and uncertainty. Now we read nothing about this distinction of mortal and venial sins in the Bible. The word of God declares, *the soul that sinneth the same shall die*. Here is nothing about mortal or venial, but we are told that every sin deserves death. How, then, can a Roman-catholic, even though he should imagine himself absolved from all his mortal sins, through the Sacrament of Penance, ever feel secure that his venial sins have been forgiven ? To increase this difficulty, do any of you know what sins *are* mortal and what *are* venial ? You have, indeed, a vague general idea that large sins are mortal and small sins are venial ; but surely this will not do, unless you know exactly where to draw the line between them. For you may make a mistake ; and, because a sin appears to *you* trifling, you may class it as a venial sin, and therefore omit to confess it ; whereas, this sin may perhaps be a mortal sin, and as such, you are taught to believe, can never be forgiven *without* confession. In this difficulty, the Church of Rome has not assisted her children with any infallible decision ; for she has never authoritatively pronounced what sins are mortal and what are venial. Different *private doctors* have indeed given their own private opinions as to what sins *they considered* mortal and what venial ; but of the opinions of these individuals, no matter how learned, P. C. has pronounced that they are "no more binding on you than those of your tailors or shoemakers." The Church, the infallible guide, has not anywhere pronounced ; so that on this important point, viz.,—What sins are to be confessed, and what are not, each individual Roman-catholic, even the most ignorant, must decide for himself. It would have been very needful that the Church of Rome should have clearly decided what kind of sins are venial, and, therefore, may be forgiven without confession ; for on this subject very great differences exist even among confessors themselves ; and it has frequently happened that the very same sin which has been pronounced mortal by one confessor, has by another been considered venial, and not worth confessing. Nor can it be known which of these opinions, even according to your own Church, was right ; for the priests themselves have no infallible rule to guide them—all is left to the discretion of the priests, who do not even claim to be individually infallible, and who often differ among themselves. Now, it will be easily seen how dangerous it is to leave to the discretion of each individual priest to decide so important a point, as what sins are too trifling to be confessed, and what cannot be forgiven without his absolution ; for it is well known in what a

different light different persons look upon the same sin, according to the manner in which they have been brought up, their own natural propensities, or other causes; and, therefore, if there be any subject on which the decision of infallibility would have been requisite, it is in defining exactly what sins must be confessed; for if, on this subject, a priest make a mistake, then there is no safety for a Roman-catholic—all then is insecure. Next, *how large a number of sins does a Roman-catholic forget to confess?* There are many sins committed by you every day which, from dullness of conscience, you do not even notice, and therefore cannot confess; and, to add to this number, many of those which you have noticed at the time you must have forgotten again before the day of confession arrives. What becomes then of all these sins? Are they, or are they not, forgiven of God? If your Church consider that to obtain pardon for all this large class of sins, it is sufficient to say, "From my secret ones cleanse me, O Lord," what is the difference between the sin you have confessed and the other equally heinous which you have chanced to forget, that the one may be forgiven by your merely *asking God's* forgiveness, and the other *cannot be forgiven without being confessed to the priest, and all the circumstances connected with it detailed* in full into his ear. If you say that the priest's absolution covers those sins which you have forgotten, then you virtually become a Protestant by allowing *that sins can be forgiven without confession to a priest*. If all these innumerable sins may be forgiven without the priest knowing them, then why not all the rest of your sins also. If it be absolutely necessary that all mortal sins should be confessed, then the fact that you may have forgotten some *makes all again doubt and uncertainty*.

What opens the door to much uncertainty and doubt respecting the doctrine of Absolution, is the fact, that confessors differ much as to the kind and degree of repentance which is sufficient in order that the penitent may receive absolution. Attrition, we are told, is the smallest degree of repentance which entitles a man to receive the pardon of the priest; but we do not find it anywhere explained exactly what your Church understands by this attrition.\* We know well

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\* "What is it which reduces them to this most ignoble of all bondages?—Crime? Profligacy? Infidelity? No; it is the disease 'of a scrupulous conscience.' Not—understand—that conscience, in such a state of excitement, influences them by its strong and subduing compulsion to yield without resistance to the command of the priest, but that the same casuistry which, in consideration of their learning and wisdom, indulges them with a certain degree of freedom, pronounces, that they must surrender the privilege if they are smitten with what it regards as the disease of a 'scrupulous conscience.' A few short extracts from Dens will explain my meaning. They describe certain symptoms of the malady:—'If a man doubt often of his salvation, and anxiously questions others; if he be distressed with various thoughts respecting faith and other virtues,' his conscience is, probably, affected by the disease of scrupulousness.

A second symptom is—'If one do not follow, unless with anxiety and apprehension, the decisions and counsels of the priest.'

what repentance is; but it is difficult to understand exactly what attrition is. It therefore again rests with the priests to define exactly what attrition is; and who then is to decide whether or not you have this attrition. *Here again all is doubt and uncertainty.*

But lastly, what renders the Sacrament of Penance the most doubtful and uncertain thing in the world is, the Romish doctrine of Intention. Your Church requires that in order that Absolution should take effect, the intention should exist in the priest's mind to absolve the penitent. Now, how can you be assured of this? What security can you have that the priest, notwithstanding his professions, may not be at heart an unbeliever? How can you know that he fully believes in the efficacy of the Sacrament he is performing? How can you tell that his thoughts are intent on what he is doing? He may be thinking of something else while pronouncing the words of absolution. This must be a very common case; and yet, whenever it occurs, no real absolution has been given. I have shown you above that in order that the absolution may be certain, it is necessary that the priest to

A third symptom—'If men, pious in their manners and habits, examine dubious matters without apprehension.'

A fourth—'If one think that unlawful in itself which he can excuse in others.'

In these symptoms, I apprehend, you would discern the workings of a mind labouring under conviction of sin, conscious of frailty, apprehensive of danger, burdened with a sense of Christian responsibility. They are symptoms you would love to witness. Romanism does not so regard them. They denote a state of heart and mind upon which she looks with disapprobation and dismay, and for which, after her manner, she prescribes a strong remedy:—'As for the general remedies for' the disease of a scrupulous conscience, 'the first is'—what do you imagine?—'It is an humble and BLIND OBEDIENCE TO THE CONFESSOR OR DIRECTOR.' It is not prayer. It is not humiliation. It is not patient reflection. It is not the agony of supplication, in which the contrite and broken-hearted penitent casts himself in spirit at the feet of the Lord Jesus, imploring that He would send forth His grace to sanctify and enlighten him. It is not, either, the counsels and exhortations of a wise and faithful minister, who would gently admonish and instruct him, strengthening his reason, and enabling him to understand, to his soul's profit, the warnings of a troubled conscience. No—this would be beneath the dignity of Romanism. Her remedy is blindness—'*a blind obedience to the confessor.*' The passage continues—'without examination of reasons or arguments; and this remedy is of so great importance and necessity, that without it others can prove nothing.' That is to say, unless a man make his priest his God, he cannot hope for deliverance from the disease of a 'scrupulous conscience.' The confessor is to assist in this process:—'To ensure a universal or unqualified obedience, the confessor shall make known certain principles—first, that a scrupulous man is not in a condition to direct himself, because his judgment is disturbed; secondly, that to prefer his own judgment, indicates a mind haughty and adverse to the claims of Christian modesty, prudence, and humility; thirdly, *that although his confessor may err*, the scrupulous man will not sin by obeying him.' Why is this? 'Because what the priest directs in the Confessional, he orders AS THE REPRESENTATION OF GOD.' He is, therefore, to be obeyed without deliberation or fear" (Rev. Mortimer O'Sullivan at Glasgow, 1835).

whom you confess should be able to read *your* heart. This doctrine of Intention makes it necessary that *you* should in turn be able to read the heart of the priest; for unless you can know what is passing in the mind of the priest, you cannot tell whether he has really the intention to absolve you or not; and thus you cannot be sure whether you have been really absolved or not; so here again *all is doubt and uncertainty*.

Far, then, from the doctrine of Confession giving any real security of pardon, it makes your pardon the most doubtful and uncertain thing in the world. But though confession does not give any *real* security to a Roman-catholic, it does undoubtedly give a *false and deceitful peace*. The man who can so blind himself to Scripture and reason as to trust entirely to the mere word of a priest, unsupported by any further testimony, may indeed find it for the present an *easy* way to trust to him, and fancy himself secure; but, alas! he will awaken when too late to know that he has been leaning on a bruised reed, which will only pierce his hand. But once the sinner knows that Jesus, our surety, has paid our debt—once he has heard his Saviour saying those beautiful words—“*Him that cometh to me I will not cast out*” (John vi. 37), he then rejoices with a *true* security of pardon—he then enjoys a *true and real peace* which will never deceive him, but will lead him to that eternal peace and rest which remaineth for the people of God.

I remain your sincere friend,

JOHN THOMAS WALLER.

Castletown Manor, Pallaskenry.

## The Confessional and James v. 16.

“Nor does he here speak of sacramental confession, as appears from what he says—‘*confess one to another*’; for sacramental confession is not *to one another*, but *to the priests*.”—Cardinal Cajetan, in James v. 16.

ROMAN-CATHOLIC FRIENDS,—It is a strange fact that in his attacks on the Protestant Church P. C., probably from being unable to bring any real reproach against her, has sometimes reproached us one day with holding a certain doctrine and the next day reproached us with *not* holding the very same doctrine.\* Thus, he said, “Your Church

\* “But the chief cause [i.e., for Auricular Confession] is, I am convinced (as in the case of other Romish practices), that there is a natural craving in mankind for this unburdening of the conscience by a confession to a fellow-creature. The Romish system has taken advantage of this, by misinterpreting the Scriptural recommendation, to ‘*confess our sins one to another*’ (the Apostle does not say ‘to the Minister’ or to the Church) as a requisition of a *regular* and *complete* periodical confession making a portion of Christian discipline. And the practice

. . . . has laughed out confession and satisfaction ; " while in another letter he says, " After this you may have cause to regret that you can't see a confessor in the Bible. At all events you have one in your Prayerbook." Sometimes he reproaches us that we hold confession just as well as the Church of Rome does ; at other times our Church wants one of Christ's sacraments, and the best means of promoting a godly life. It seems difficult to understand how P. C. can have these two apparently conflicting causes of reproach against our Church, viz. :—that *we hold* the doctrine of confession and that *we do not* ; the only way in which I can reconcile his statements together, so as to make *both* appear consistent with truth, is to conclude that *we do* hold the doctrine of Confession to a certain extent, *i.e.*, so far as it is taught in the Bible—and that *we do not* hold the *unscriptural and pernicious system* of confession practised by the Roman-catholic Church ; when the conclusion will be that the Protestant Church has found the golden mean, guided by the Word of God, the unerring rule. And so indeed it is ; for, while rejecting\* Auricular Confession to a priest,

so established, whether with Romanists or with Protestants, *I am convinced does evil ten times oftener, and of ten thousand times greater magnitude, than good* : nor can I regard it but as, practically, one of the very worst parts of Romanism. Indeed, my chief reason for not dwelling on it further is, that *I could not*, with propriety, exhibit it in its true colours, or describe what I have good ground to believe respecting its effects. Of course, when there is any particular in which we are conscious of having wronged our neighbour, it is our duty then to confess to him that we have wronged him, and to ask his forgiveness. This is a real point of Christian humility, and a great trial of it it is ; far more than the most highflown *general* lamentation over the sinfulness of our nature. And again, when we are *consulting* some confidential adviser as to any part of our conduct, we are right (supposing him worthy of being an adviser at all), in opening our hearts to him, and confessing the faults and infirmities which we are consulting him how to shake off and counteract. And *giving* advice also to a friend, we may have occasion to supply him with a useful warning, by freely confessing to him the snares in which we have been entangled. *But except in these three cases, CONFESSIONS OF SIN HAD BETTER BE MADE TO GOD ONLY*" (Whately's "Errors of Romanism, having their Origin in Human Nature," p. 221).

\* CONFESSION HELD IN THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND.—"*I hold that the Church of England discountenances any attempt on the part of her clergy to introduce a system of papistical confession, or, in order to carry out such a system, to require men and women to submit themselves to the questioning and examination of the priest. Such a system of inquiry into the secrets of hearts must, in my judgment, lead to innumerable evils. GOD FORBID that our clergy should administer, or that our wives and daughters should be subjected to it*" (Dr. Wilberforce, Bishop of Oxford, with regard to Mr. West, of Boynhill. 1858).

The Bishop of Exeter, writing to Mr. Prynne in 1852 about Miss Sellon, says :—"I have more than once publicly said before, as well as privately, told my candidates for holy orders, that *the Church of England appears to me to discourage confession as a general habit.*"

Lord Chas. Thynne, writing in 1853, says :—"It appeared to me, both from the

we do both enjoin and practise that kind of confession commanded by the Apostle James in the passage which P. C. has now adduced (James v. 16)—“Confess, therefore, your sins one to another, and pray for one another.” This is a command addressed to Christians generally—it has reference, not to a *forced sacramental* confession of sins, but to a mutual acknowledgment of our faults to each other; and more particularly a candid confession to our brother of any injury we may have done him, in order that we may be reconciled together again. But here is nothing about a priest. On the contrary, the passage proves entirely against the argument it is brought to establish; for it is a remarkable circumstance, that though the Apostle had just before been speaking of Christian ministers, yet he does not say “confess therefore your sins to *them*,” but “confess therefore your sins *one to another*.” Surely this passage might more reasonably be brought forward as an argument *against* Auricular Confession to a priest; for the Apostle, though he had just said, that in certain cases, ministers were to be sent for, yet, instead of commanding that confession should be made to them, couches his exhortation in these words—“Confess therefore your sins *one to another*,” which clearly show that he *did not* intend to point to the priests. If in this place St. James was treating of Auricular Confession, then, by saying, “confess one to another,” he made it as much the duty of the priests to confess to the laity, as of the laity to confess to the priests; and, in that case, this verse gives as great authority to the laity to absolve the priests as it does to the priests to absolve the laity. The Apostle is evidently enjoining *mutual* confession (“*vobis invicem*,” to use the words of Erasmus, “*non sacerdotibus*”), which overthrows the doctrine of Auricular Confession, by making it as much the duty of the priest to confess to the layman, as of the layman to confess to the priest; and does away with all pretence to that priestly power which the clergy of the Church of Rome are so desirous of exercising over their flocks. The word “*allelois*,” which both our Bible and the Douay have translated “one to another,” necessarily implies mutual reciprocal action. In the Latin Vulgate it is rendered “*alterutrum*.” The same word occurs in the 9th verse of this same chapter of St. James, where the sentence is rendered in the Douay—“Grudge not,

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practice of the Church of England, as well as from the testimony of the Bishops, that *it did not sanction* confession except in extreme cases. I mentioned this to the Bishop of Salisbury, and asked his opinion on the subject. He very candidly told me that, *as a minister of the Established Church of England, I could not enforce the necessity of penance, which is a sacrament in the [Roman] Catholic Church, and of which confession forms an important part*” (Browne’s “Tractarianism,” p. 392).

“The detestable confessional” (Bishop Ryle, “Facts and Men,” p. 392).

“It is most evident and plain that this Auricular Confession hath not his warrant in God’s word” (“Homilies of Church of Ireland on Repentance,” p. 508).

brethren, one against another"; and in the Latin Vulgate, the most authoritative of all editions to a Roman-catholic, "nolite ingenuiscere, fratres, in *alterutrum*." Another instance occurs in Acts vii. 26, "inati adikeite allelous." This the Latin Vulgate has translated "ut quid nocetis alterutrum," and the Douay "why hurt ye one another." The Church of Rome might as well say that this means why hurt you *the priests*, as that the passage in James, "Confess one to another," means "confess to a priest." In their note on this text even the Rhemish Annotators do not venture to assert that St. James speaks of Auricular Confession, and the hesitating tone of their note speaks volumes for our argument. "*It is not certain* (says the note) that he (St. James) speaks here of Sacramental Confession, yet the circumstances of the letter will bear it, and *very probable it is* that he means of it." Now I think when we know with what boldness the Church of Rome appropriates to herself *every* text in which she thinks she can discern a shadow of colour for her doctrines, we may very fairly conclude that when the Rhemish commentators were constrained to say, that "*It is not certain*" that St. James here proves their doctrine, the inference is, that it is very certain he does not. Listen to the opinion of Cardinal Cajetan on this text—"Nor does he (St. James) here speak of sacramental confession, as appears from what he says, confess one to another;\* for sacramental confession is not to *one another*, but to *the priests*" (Cajetan Comment. in James v. 16).

When rightly understood, this passage is strongly opposed to your present practice of private confession to a priest, or asking him to pray for you, except you make him confess to you and you pray for him in turn. Even the very Mass-book, by the form of confession practised at Mass, shows us the way in which this passage of St. James was formerly understood; and it is a virtual acknowledgment that, until lately, this text being applied as a proof of private sacramental confession was a thing unknown—that it is quite a novelty to endeavour to draw out of this text the Romish doctrine of the necessity of a private confession of each particular sin to the priest. This is proved by the fact, that in the Confiteor, while you are confessing to

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\* Luther said:—"They bring forward these things of St. James, "*Confess your faults to one another.*" Singular confessor! his name is *One Another*. Whence it would follow that the confessors should also confess themselves to their penitents; that each Christian should be, in his turn, pope, bishop, priest, and the pope himself should confess to all" (Luther's Opp., xvii. 701).

"The bailiff pronounced his [Henry Von Zophten's] condemnation . . . after which they brought him a poor monk to receive his confession. 'Brother,' said Henry, 'have I ever done you any wrong?' 'None,' replied the monk. 'In that case I have nothing to confess to you,' resumed Henry, 'and you have nothing to forgive me.'" (Luther's Opp., xix. 333).

the priest, the priest is in turn confessing to you. The Confiteor, or form of confession, used at Mass, runs thus :—

“ The priest says :—

“ I confess to Almighty God, to blessed Mary, ever a virgin, to &c. . . . AND TO YOU, BRETHREN (*et vobis fratres*), that I have sinned exceedingly . . . through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault. Therefore, I beseech the blessed Mary, ever a virgin, . . . AND YOU, BRETHREN (*et vobis fratres*), to pray to our Lord God for me.”

“ The people say :—

“ I confess to Almighty God, to blessed Mary, ever a virgin, to &c. . . . and to you, father (*et tibi pater*), that I have sinned exceedingly . . . through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault. Therefore I beseech the blessed Mary, ever a virgin, . . . and you, O father (*et te pater*), to pray to our Lord God for me.”

Thus you see the priest confesses to you while you are confessing to him ; and at the conclusion of the Confiteor, while you call on the priest to pray for you, he, at the same time, calls on you to pray for him, thus literally fulfilling the command of James, “ Confess, therefore, your sins one to another ”—priest to people, and people to priest ; “ and *pray one for another* ”—priest for people, and people for priest. Surely the Church of Rome by her own practice contradicts the statement made in the note of the Douay Bible, that “ This precept means, that we must confess to men whom God hath appointed, and who, by their ordination and jurisdiction, have received the power of remitting sins in his name ” (Note on James v. 16). If the Douay note be correct, that we are only to confess to those “ whom God hath appointed ” to “ remit sins in his name,” P. C. must allow that this power is given to every man, woman, and child in the chapel, or else consent to condemn his own Mass-book, in which the priest is directed to *confess to them all* while they are confessing to him. Lest you might think I am endeavouring to calumniate your Church, and that perhaps no such prayer occurs in your Mass-book as the Confiteor, in which the priest confesses his sins to the people, I quote from Dr. Challoner’s “ Catholic Christian ” (page 112), a book doubtless well known to you, where this Roman-catholic author thus admits the fact :—“ Our adversaries object to this form of confession, because therein we confess our sins to the saints, as if this were giving them an honour which belongs to God alone ; not considering that the confessing our sins to any one, so far from being an honour peculiar to God, is what WE ARE INSTRUCTED IN SCRIPTURE TO DO ONE TO ANOTHER (James v. 16) ; and, accordingly in this very form, which we call the Confiteor, we not only confess our sins to God, and to His Saints, but THE PRIEST ALSO CONFESSES TO THE PEOPLE and the People to the Priest.” What is this Confiteor, then, but the virtual acknowledgment on the part of the Church of Rome herself, that the passage in James merely directs a *mutual confession* of faults *one to another* ? And when we

have your Church herself, at the solemn service of the Mass, directing the priest, as an appropriate fulfilment of this very commandment of St. James, to confess his sins to the people, and request them to pray for him, can there be a stronger proof that it is *not* necessary, although it be laid down in the Douay note, that we should confess our sins to those "whom God hath appointed, and who, by their ordination and jurisdiction, have received the power of remitting sins in His name."\* And this reminds me of an anecdote which I have read, respecting this note in the Douay Testament, which I give you as an illustration of a fact I have already brought under your notice, namely, that the notes to the Douay Bible, although purporting to throw light on the text, yet, instead of really doing so, are in many places so framed as to subvert its meaning altogether. An argument having arisen between a Protestant and a poor Roman-catholic woman with respect to the use of the notes in the Douay Bible, the Protestant endeavouring to maintain that there is much instruction for the ignorant to be found in the Word of God without the assistance of those notes, the woman replied that it would be dangerous to read the Bible without the notes; because, without their assistance, people would often be apt to take a meaning out of the text exactly opposite to the doctrine of the Catholic Church. "For instance," she said, "if we had not the notes to tell us so, who on reading James v. 16, 'Confess, therefore, your sins *one to another*,' could possibly guess that the Apostle meant to the *priests* of the Church." I am sure candour will compel each one of you to agree with the observation of the woman, and to confess that it is not surprising that the Church of Rome is so much afraid to give even her own Bible into the hands of

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\* "We have the institution and customary use of Baptism and the Holy Supper in the time of Jesus and the Apostles most distinctly described. Why, then, is no mention ever made in the New Testament of confession, which, according to the Roman Church, is more necessary to salvation than communion itself? We see in the New Testament the Apostles themselves baptizing, and the first believers celebrating the Supper of the Lord: why do we never see the Apostles in the confession-chair? Why did those first believers never confess? The Apostle St. Paul describes minutely, in his letters to Timothy and Titus, all the duties of bishops, priests, and deacons: why among these duties is there not that of listening to the confessions of the faithful, and of absolving them? St. Peter, and St. Paul, and all the other Apostles, speak of all the duties of the faithful: why do they not speak of the duty of revealing their sins to a priest, if they wished to be saved? St. James alone (chap. v. ver. 16) speaks of a certain kind of confession which we ought to make to each other of our faults when we have a disagreement with a brother—certainly not of a confession to be made to a priest. Now, if confession were a sacrament, if it were as necessary as the Roman Church asserts it is, is it imaginable that neither Jesus Christ nor the Apostles should have spoken of it? This negative argument is, to my apprehension, so strong, that in default of any other argument whatever, it would suffice to prove confession not to be necessary to salvation, but we have positive arguments besides" (De Sanctis Confession, p. 23).

her people except accompanied with the notes, well knowing that these notes, instead of faithfully explaining the text, are only framed with a view to torture out of each verse the doctrines of Rome.

I remain your sincere friend,

JOHN THOMAS WALLER.

Castletown Manor, Pallaskenry.

## The Immorality of the Confessional.

"But fornication, and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not so much as be named among you, as becometh saints; or obscenity or foolish talking . . . for the things that are done by them in secret, it is a shame even to speak of" (Eph. v. 3, 4, 12).

**ROMAN-CATHOLIC FRIENDS,**—The manner in which your church looks on repentance is clearly shown by the rule she has made that persons must confess once a year. You may confess oftener if you wish; but it is considered sufficient to insure your salvation that you should confess once a year. Now, who could possibly remember all the sins which he had committed during a twelvemonth. There is not one hour of a man's life in which he does not commit sin either in thought, word, or deed, or by omitting to do what he ought to do. The word of God tells us that "all the thoughts" of men's hearts is "bent upon evil at all times" (Gen. vi. 5.) What an unscriptural view, then, of sin and of repentance must that church hold which teaches that a person may in a few minutes confess to a priest all the sins which he has committed in the course of a whole year. Imagine anyone imposing on you the task to remember and relate, not only all the actions you have performed, but also all the thoughts which have passed through your minds during the course of a year, and you will be able to form some idea how impossible it is to remember all the sins that you have committed in that time. If you could remember them and tell them, each of you would nearly require a priest to himself to hear them.

The utter impossibility of recalling all the sins you have committed in the course of a twelvemonth, made it necessary for your church to invent the rule that no sins need be confessed except mortal sins.\*

\* "You have, I believe, about 1,200 priests, and about 1,800,000 people in the United States, making an average of 1,500 persons to each priest, all of whom must confess and receive private absolution individually, a little before Easter, every year. How much time, at the rate of fifteen working hours each day, would it be necessary for each priest to devote to that single duty? I do not affect to inform you, of course, because you know the secret working of the confessional incomparably better than I do. But I do desire to set my other readers on the track of a fair consideration of your system. Allow, then, *only*

Thus, when we look closer into the matter we lose our surprise that a person should be expected to tell all his sins in a few minutes ; for the Church of Rome very cleverly gets over the difficulty by making most sins no sins at all. There is not one of the commandments, according to the Casuists, which a person may not break without being convicted of mortal sin. For if he be ingenious enough, he may, although he have transgressed them all, be held guiltless of mortal sin, upon some such plea as that he did not commit these sins taking pleasure in them as sins, that is, merely for the sake of sinning—but for a desirable or necessary purpose. A man may be a liar, thief, adulterer, and murderer ; yet, if a Jesuit be his confessor, he will find extenuating circumstances for him, by which he may still be freed from the guilt of mortal sin. But are the Laws of God, think you as accommodating to sinners as those Jesuit confessors are ? Is Divine Justice to be cheated by these divisions and sub-divisions of sins, of which we hear nothing in the Word of God ? Oh “ Be not deceived : God is not mocked,” and He has himself declared that “ the soul that sinneth, the same shall die.” Yes, though twenty priests should tell you that you had not incurred the guilt of mortal sin, yet be assured that if you have, even in your inmost thoughts, transgressed in the minutest particular against any Law of God, nothing can save you from eternal destruction, except to rely solely on the atonement offered for you by Jesus on the cross.

Persons who wish to get over their confession easily, may also do so in another way, which is, by going to confession at a time of the

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one hour to each person, in which the mortal sins of act, word, and even of thought, *during the whole year previous*, must be confessed with perfect sincerity and integrity. And suppose that each priest could devote fifteen hours every day to his flock of 1,500, which is the average, and it would take 200 days to go through the whole work, and then he must begin again, because the sins committed since he commenced have to be confessed and absolved before the party can be received to his Easter Communion ? And yet I believe your practice is to get over the whole of this weighty business during Passion Week, in which your other duties do not allow of more than seven or eight hours instead of fifteen : and so a matter of nearly four months, at the rate of fifteen hours each day, and one hour to each confession, must be despatched in *six days*, or in other words 1,500 hours' work disposed of in forty-eight hours only. . . . Let us cut down our average, if you please, from 1,500 to 500 . . . and nearly two months, or fifty days, exclusive of Sundays, would be necessary to go through the whole. . . . I think I have demonstrated by a very simple calculation, *that no priest can possibly perform the duty with any real knowledge of the state of his people*. He may devote a reasonable time to one or two, or half a dozen of special favourites. . . . Fifteen minutes on an average is all he can allow them. And thus they go away quite satisfied that they are forgiven a multitude of sins which they have never confessed. And the priest contents himself with absolving, one by one, a crowd of poor deluded souls of whose real spiritual state he knows precisely nothing. . . . I have shown you that the duty is impossible to the priest, and I now proceed to show that it is equally impossible to the sinner. For your Catechism of Trent requires every one that undertakes this confession to acknowledge not only *all the mortal*

year when the priest has much business of the same kind on his hands, at which time he will not be likely to be very particular in his enquiries. The Jesuit Banny says that "if any one of ignorance or simplicity confess his faults only in gross, without determinately expressing any of them in particular, there is no need to draw from his mouth the repetition of these faults, if it cannot be conveniently done, because the confessor is pressed with penitents that give him not leisure for it." This opinion, you see, goes to show that the absolution of the priest is just as valid, although from the number of penitents coming to him together, he has not time to examine into the sins of each. Travellers who have been at Rome tell us that on Palm Sunday every year there is a religious officer called the "Grand Penitentiary," appointed to hear confessions by wholesale. This person sits in a chair in St. Peter's, and holds in his hand a long pole like a fishing-rod. At the end of this pole the penitents kneel, several at a time. They mutter a few words which the "Penitentiary" cannot hear, and he then touches each of them on the head with his pole, when they rise absolved, as they think, from all their sins, and that without having been subjected to the intrusive scrutiny of the priest, which, it appears, is no small advantage; for, to avoid this scrutiny, we are told that in Roman-catholic countries on the Continent many ladies never go to confession except at Christmas or Easter; because at those seasons, from the great number of penitents, the priests have not time to put to them the polluting questions which at other times they propose to them—questions which modesty commands shall not be

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*sins, but all the wilful thoughts of mortal sins, which have been indulged during the past year. What human being could do this? And if he could, would a week or a month suffice for the recital? It is no easy task for the best of men to recall, each night, the sins of the heart which the past day has witnessed. And, therefore, what must be the practical result of such a system on the vast majority of your people but the habit of trusting to the supposed power of the priest, instead of the real progress of the soul, feeling perfectly easy about those sins which they expect to be forgiven, although they cannot recall them to their memory? How infinitely superior is the system of the Church of England, which requires neither her priests or people to perform impossibilities, nor claims for her ministry a power, which belongs to the searcher of hearts alone? Which gives her people regularly the teaching of the Scriptures and the Liturgy, and tells them always to examine their own consciences, and that not lightly, and after the manner of dissemblers with God. Which calls on them solemnly to judge themselves, that they be not judged of the Lord. And which pronounces absolution only in the form of the declaration, that God absolveth all those who truly repent and unfeignedly believe his holy Gospel: or at the Communion directs her priests to pray, in the words of the pure and primitive Church:—'Almighty God, our heavenly father, who of his great mercy hath promised forgiveness of sins to all those who, with hearty repentance and true faith, turn unto him, have mercy upon you, pardon and deliver you from all your sins, confirm and strengthen you in all goodness, and bring you to everlasting life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.'*" ("Hopkins' Milner Refuted," vol. ii., pp. 269, 270).

copied here, and from which one would imagine every virtuous mind would recoil with horror. The Theological Treatise of Peter Dens, which is a class-book on the Confessional, is, happily for the state of morals, published in Latin. It is fortunate that this circumstance prevents the book from being generally circulated; for, not in any of the most immoral productions of the day is there to be found a work which, for immorality and pollution, will bear comparison with Dens' Theology on the Confessional, the guide of the priests for questioning females! I have said it is fortunate that the book is not in a language generally understood; though, viewing the matter in another light, it would be well if it were in English, that husbands, brothers, and fathers, might know to what a polluted atmosphere they expose their wives, sisters, and daughters, when they sanction their attendance at the Confessional. The Rev. H. Beamish, in a lecture written by him, says: "I will not shock the virtuous feeling of those who may read this book, by the recital of the authorised 'examen' of the Confessional; suffice it to say I have in my possession a book in common use among Roman-catholics in this country and in Ireland, given to me by a lady, the wife of an officer and niece of a Roman-catholic bishop, who when supposed to be dying renounced Popery, part of which is so loathsome and offensive to every feeling of purity and moral principle that I am obliged to keep it under lock and key, and would not recite aloud a passage from it for any possible inducement that could be offered." This book, whose immorality is thus denounced, is the book out of which are taken the questions which are proposed to your wives and daughters in the confessional. Volumes could be written on this subject; and should P. C. desire it, I can show you from the bulls of your own Popes and other sources, of whose truthfulness you

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\* "The books which are placed in the hands of professed penitents, with a view to prepare their minds for examination and cross-examination, the sifting, searching scrutiny through which they are about to pass, *are often of such a nature as to inflame the imagination and thoughts, and to defile every spring of purity in the soul.* Such, too, is the effect of the questions asked. The purity of the kneeling penitent is put upon the rack, every succeeding question is a fresh turning of the deadly screw, until an amount of evil has been communicated, and a depth of iniquity stirred, and an extent of injury has been done to the moral sensibilities, such as no mind can conceive. And can we imagine a position more perilous, both to the confessor and the confessed, than this? What must be the extent of her forgetfulness of all self-respect, who . . . What must be the empoisoning effects of the feelings, facts, and circumstances minutely detailed and perpetually poured into his ear? To look at sin on the surface of society is awful, to feel its workings in our own hearts, still more so; but to listen continually to the fearful details of sin, which are constantly brought to this tribunal, must be fatally dangerous to the purest and most fortified mind. The practices of Auricular Confession would entail a thousand evils and dangers upon the parties concerned! . . . But shall we imagine the effect upon the feelings of him who receives the confession? Each sinner makes but one confession in a given time; but each priest in the same space listens to a

could not doubt, that, far from tending to increase morality, the confessional is a mighty engine employed by Satan for the promotion of vice of the lowest description. When writing on the question whether "Sanctity," one of the marks arbitrarily attributed to the True Church, be to be found in the Church of Rome, I showed you from the highest government authorities that the state of morality in Roman-catholic countries has reached a frightfully low ebb, and that the more exclusively Roman-catholic a country is, the more entirely immorality abounds in it. I ask you now whether the fact of its being made a matter of religion by your Church that wives, daughters, and mothers of families should, when they attend the confessional, be subject to an interrogation of the most obscene and polluting character is not of itself sufficient so to lower the tone of morals as to account for the polluted state of society in countries exclusively Roman-catholic.

I remain your sincere friend,

JOHN THOMAS WALLER.

Castletown Manor, Pallaskenry.

hundred! What, then, after awhile must that receptacle become into which the continual droppings of all the sins of a parish are falling, and through which the copious abomination filters?" (Rev. Oct. W. Winslow).

"Let it be considered, that there being some things which St. Paul saith are not to be so much as named among Christians, it must needs look indecently, that all men and all women should come and make the priests' ears a common sewer to empty all their filthiness; and that which a modest man would blush to hear, he must needs be used to, and it is the greatest part of his employment to attend to. True it is, that a physician must see and handle the impurest ulcers; but it is because the cure does not depend upon the patient, but upon the physician, who by general advertisement cannot cure the patient, unless he had an universal medicine, which the priest hath; the medicine of repentance, which can indifferently cure all sins, whether the priest knew them or no. And, therefore, *all this filthy communication is therefore intolerable, because it is not necessary*; and it not only pollutes the priest's ears, but his tongue, too; for, lest any circumstance or any sin be concealed, he thinks himself obliged to interrogate and proceed to particular questions on the basest things . . . which thing does not only deteriorate all honest and modest conversation, but it teaches men to understand more sins than even they (it may be) knew of" (Taylor's "Discourses of Popery").

## The Abominations of the Confessional.

### Alphonsus' Instructions to the Redemptorists about the Questions to be asked in the Confessional.

ROMAN-CATHOLIC FRIENDS,—In former letters I described some of the ways in which the Redemptorists make the Commandments of God of none effect by their teachings. I have much more to say on this branch of the subject; but I propose to devote this letter to some remarks on the instructions which Alphonsus gives his priests to prepare them to act as confessors: a subject both difficult and important—it will be hard to do it justice, and yet write with sufficient delicacy.

I believe that to gain ascendancy over body and soul is the grand object of the Church of Rome, and the most terrible engine she has for gaining the ascendancy is the Confessional. There is no part of her system which enables her to hold the human family in such an iron grasp as the claiming and enforcing the right to know the thoughts of the heart. It is as dangerous as it is powerful. The Rev. P. Connelly was for years a priest of the Church of Rome, and he writes thus:—"I have had experience in the Confessional from princes downward, and out of it, such as perhaps has fallen to the lot of no other living man, and my solemn conviction is, that an unmarried priesthood, organised like that of the Church of Rome, is in irreconcilable hostility with all great human interests" (Reasons for abjuring Allegiance to the See of Rome, p. 8).

The decrees of the Council Trent prove that the Church of Rome holds the institution of the Confessional to be of prime importance. In the 14th Session, the 7th Canon is as follows:—"Whosoever shall affirm that in order to obtain the forgiveness of sins in the sacrament of penance, it is *not* by Divine command necessary to confess all and every mortal sin which occurs to the memory after due and diligent premeditation, including *secret offences*, and those which have been committed against the two LAST COMMANDMENTS of the Decalogue, and those circumstances which change the species of sins" . . . let

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\* "Why are all Roman-catholic nations inferior to nations belonging to Protestantism? Only in the confessional can the solution of the problem be found. And why are Roman-catholic nations degraded in proportion to their submission to their priests? It is because the more often the individuals composing these nations go to confess, the more rapidly they sink in the sphere of intelligence and morality. A terrible example of the Auricular Confession depravity has just occurred in my own family. . . . I was against my own daughter going to confession; but her poor mother, who is under the control of the priest, earnestly wanted her to go. Not to have a disagreeable scene in my house, I had to yield to the tears of my wife. On the following day of the confession they believed I was absent, but I was in my office, with the door sufficiently open to hear every-

*him be accursed.*" The 9th Commandment, be it observed ("Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife"), is one in which the most indelicate questions must be asked, yet the Council of Trent requires particular examination on that subject.

Is there one word in the Bible to enforce or sanction this private confession to a priest? Is there one instance in the New Testament of any apostle, bishop, or clergyman, calling on a man or woman to kneel down and confess to him in private his sins of thought, word, and deed? NOT ONE.

The earliest writers of the Church knew of no such compulsory private confession. St. Augustine in his *Confessions* (Book x. c. 3), asks—"What have I to do with men that they should hear my confessions, as though they could heal all my diseases?"

St. Chrysostom says—"Thou art ashamed to say thou hast sinned. Confess thy faults, then, daily in thy prayer. For do I say, Confess them to thy fellow-servant, who may reproach thee therewith? Confess them to God who healeth them" (On Psalm 50).

In the words of our Archbishop Ussher we say—"No kind of confession either public or private, is disallowed by us that is in any way requisite for the due execution of the ancient power of the keys which Christ bestowed on His Church; the thing which we reject is that *new picklock* of sacramental confession obtruded on men's consciences, as

thing which could be said by my wife and the child. And the following conversation took place:—"What makes you look so thoughtful and bad, my dear Lucy, since you went to confess?" My child answered not a word. After two or three minutes' silence, I heard the mother saying, 'Why do you weep, my dear Lucy?—are you sick? But no answer.' After a short silence, my wife spoke again to her child. At last, in a trembling voice, she said—"Oh! dear mamma, if you knew what the priest asked me, and what he said to me when I confessed, you would, perhaps, be as sad as I am." 'But what could he have said to you. He is a holy man; you must have misunderstood him, if you think he has said anything wrong.' My child threw herself into her mother's arms, and answered with a voice half suffocated with sobs—"Do not ask me to tell you what the priest has said; it is so shameful that I cannot repeat it. His words have stuck to my heart as the leech put upon the arm of my little friend the other day. What does the priest think of me for having put to me such questions?" My wife answered—"I will go to the priest and will teach him a lesson. I have noticed myself that he goes too far when questioning old people, but I had the hope he was more prudent when questioning children. I ask of you, however, never to speak of this to anybody, especially let not your poor father know anything about it." . . . I could refrain myself no longer. I abruptly entered the parlour. My daughter threw herself into my arms; my wife screamed with terror, and almost fell into a swoon. I said—"My child, if you love me, put your hand on your heart and promise me never to go to confession again. Fear God, my child, love Him, and walk in His presence, for His eyes see you everywhere. Remember that He is always ready to forgive and bless you every time you turn your heart to Him. Never place yourself again at the feet of a priest to be defiled and degraded" (Chiniquy's "The Priest, the Woman, and the Confessional," p. 132).

necessary to salvation, by the Canons of Trent" (Answer to a Jesuit, p. 90).

A particular, secret, full *sacramental* confession of all sins to a priest, on pain that if not confessed they cannot be forgiven, we declare to be a Romish institution, full of danger to the souls of priests and people, a confession to be extorted by questions which we shall see the nature of just now.

Alphonsus says—"He who has offended God by mortal sin *has no other remedy* to prevent his damnation but the confession of his sin." "But if I am sorry for my sin from my heart, and if I do penance for it during my life, shall I not be forgiven?" He replies "You may do as much as you please, but *if you do not confess every mortal sin* you remember, *you cannot obtain forgiveness*" (*On the Commandments*, p. 271).

We assert that Alphonsus requires that the most filthy subjects shall be conversed on, and the most impure questions asked in the Confessional. I have his "*Moral Theology*" before me. It was written to guide his priests when hearing confessions. Part of this book consists of Treatises on the Ten Commandments. Tract iv. ch. 2, contains every question which could be asked on what he calls the 6th and 9th Commandments, viz., "Thou shalt not commit adultery: Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife." The pages from 205 to 242 of the second volume are filled with most *indelicate discussions*. In the sixth and seventh volumes there is a Treatise on Matrimony full of the same filthiness. Most indecent questions fill many pages. In the eighth volume there is a treatise called "The Praxis of a Confessor," and he returns again to the same subject.

It may be objected, "These chapters discuss these things merely to inform the confessors' minds." What can the unmarried confessor want with information about matrimony and its impediments? Can he marry? Must it not be he wants the information in order to enable him to speak on those things to those who confess? In fact, Alphonsus

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\* "We admit at once that the priesthood must be taught things which are *unfit for the knowledge* of women or of men; that they have books, and that they must read them, *wholly unfit for circulation* among young people. These books, however, are not written in the vernacular language of any country, and a very small part of them is occupied with the subject in question. But, nevertheless, *the books do exist, and must exist*, so long as sin shall be in the world and a priesthood to deal with it. . . . We will also admit everything that Protestants can say against certain Treatises of Moral Theology, except that they are written for an evil end, or that they are erroneous. . . . Let these books be bad, full of language which cannot be spoken; let them be, as they are said to be, unfit for men's reading. . . . *We admit it all, and much more*, and probably a Catholic has a keener sense than a Protestant that these books are ill adapted for general circulation. . . . We certainly do not publish extracts from them. *We hide them as much as we can* from the eyes of all, and permit their use only to those who are, by the obligations of their office, bound to know them" (*The Tablet*, August 14, 1852).

admits that such is the case, by his lamenting that it was so necessary to write so fully on unchasteness, because it is so frequent a subject of confession. Twice he apologises for "writing things which *must pollute the mind*,"—since this subject is a very "*frequent and abundant matter of confession*" (vol. ii. p. 206; vol. vi. p. 303).

The *Praxis*, however, sets the matter at rest by the directions it gives how the priest shall act when he is hearing confessions (vol. viii., p. 3). If a great sinner approaches, he is to say, "Brother, be of good cheer; fear nothing; confess thy sins without fear; disclose everything with confidence; be ashamed of nothing; if you have not looked into your conscience, it will suffice if you answer my questions." He complains that some confessors ask only the number and kind of sins. One would suppose that quite enough; but he says, "A good confessor will act like a physician, investigate the cause and seriousness of the disease, by interrogating concerning the *habit of sinning, the occasion, the time, the place, the person, with whom, the combination of circumstances*." Then each section of the *Praxis* begins with saying, "*Let them be asked*," &c., &c.; and then he enters into particulars which, in some cases, are shocking.

WE CHALLENGE THE REDEMPTORISTS TO NAME SIX ROMAN-CATHOLIC MARRIED MEN, AND WE WILL NAME SIX PROTESTANT MARRIED MEN. LET THESE TWELVE MEN MEET, AND WE DEFY ANY REDEMPTORIST TO

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\* How womanly modesty rebels against the confessional we see from the following:—"After a time I said in a low voice, 'Dear sister, are you ready to begin your confession?' She then said, 'My dear father, do you remember the prayers which I made to you the other day? Can you allow me to confess my sins without forcing me to forget the respect I owe to myself, to you, and to God, who hears us? And can you promise that you will not put to me any of those questions which have already done me irreparable injury?' . . . 'My dear sister,' I answered, 'were I to follow the voice of my own feelings, I would be too happy to grant you your request, but I am only here as the minister of our holy Church, and bound to obey her laws. Through her most holy popes and theologians she tells me that I cannot forgive you your sins, if you do not confess them all just as you have committed them. The Church tells me also that you must give the details, which may add to the malice or change the nature of your sins. I am also sorry to tell you that our most holy theologians make it a duty of the confessor to question his penitent on the sins which he has good reason to suspect have been omitted . . . and I requested her to shake off her shame and obey our holy Church, which requires every one to confess their sins, if they want to be forgiven.' She calmly, but with an air of dignity, which no human words could express, said—'Is it true that after the sin of Adam and Eve, God Himself made coats of skins and clothed them, that they might not see each other's nakedness?' 'Yes,' I said, 'this is what the Holy Scriptures tell us.' 'Well, then, how is it possible,' she said, 'that our confessors dare to take away from us that holy, that divine coat of modesty and self-respect? Has not the Almighty God Himself made with His own hands that coat of womanly modesty and self-respect that we might not be to you and to ourselves a cause of shame and sin?'" (Pere Chiniquy's "The Priest, the Woman, and the Confessional," pp. 18, 25).

READ AND TRANSLATE TO THEM INTO ENGLISH, THE INSTRUCTIONS WHICH THEIR MODEL SAINT AND FOUNDER AND GREAT TEACHER ALPHONSUS GIVES IN THE VOLUME ABOVE MENTIONED, TO GUIDE HIS PRIESTS IN CONVERSING WITH PENITENTS, EVEN FEMALES. WHY SHOULD A PRIEST SPEAK TO A WOMAN ON SUBJECTS ABOUT WHICH HE WOULD BE ASHAMED TO READ TO MEN? THEY DARE NOT ANSWER THIS CHALLENGE.

We have a further proof of the evil of this system in the celebrated lamentations of Alphonsus on the danger which the Confessional brings to the souls of confessors. In speaking about hearing the confessions of women, he recommends austerity and the avoiding of familiarity, and says—“*Oh, how many confessors have lost their own souls, and those of their penitents, on account of their negligence in this respect!*” \* (Praxis, No. 193).

In another place he warns confessors against the danger of not being *strict and brief* in one's discourse with religious women, “LEST THE ONE SHOULD BEGIN TO LONG FOR THE PRESENCE OF THE OTHER, and thus *spiritual* devotion be changed *into carnal*.” And he adds—“OH, HOW MANY PRIESTS WHO BEFORE WERE INNOCENT, ON ACCOUNT OF SIMILAR ATTRACTIONS WHICH BEGAN IN THE SPIRIT, HAVE LOST BOTH GOD AND THEIR SOUL!”

It is no wonder the rulers of the Church of Rome have been accused of trying to banish modesty from the female mind. What pains do various writers take to show that the most immodest acts must be confessed by females to the priest? In the book of Alphonsus on the Commandments, he writes most strongly to urge that no woman should hide any of her sins, even of impurity, from her confessor. He tells about ten stories of persons who were damned for hiding their sins. Seven of these are stories of women whose modesty made them ashamed to tell their confessors of some sin of impurity. In each case the woman is ashamed to speak, thinks to escape by various acts of penance, then she dies, is damned, comes on earth to tell it all, and “then disappears amid such noise, that the whole world seemed falling in pieces, and left in the chamber an intolerable stench, which lasted for many days” (see pp. 274, 306, 307, 309, 310, 311).† Why so

\* The Church of Rome puts the following questions to every priest *when they are themselves confessing*:—“Nonne inter audiendus confessiones quasdam proposui questiones circa sextum decalogi præceptum cum intentione libidinosa?” (Mirror du Clerge, p. 522).

“Nonne munus audiendi confessione suscepi: aut peregi ex prava incontinentiæ appeta?” (Ibid, p. 582).

“Nonne ex auditis in confessiones occasionem sumpsi pœnitentes utriusque sexus ad peccandam sollicitandi” (Ibid, p. 582).

“Nonne extra tribunal, vel in ipso confessionis actu, aliqua, dixi aut egi cum intentione diabolica has personas seducendi” (Ibid, p. 582).

† Miss Eliza Richardson writes:—“Thus I silenced my foolish quibbling, and went on to the test of a convert's fervour and security in confession. And here was assuredly a fresh source of pain and disquiet, and one not easily vanquished. The theory had appeared, as a whole, fair and natural, but the reality, in some of its details, *was terrible*. . . . Here, however, I may remark, in

many terrible stories on one subject? Simply to prove to females they *must give up modesty or be damned.*

The Maynooth Commissioners examined many witnesses as to the amount of teaching given to the students in the "Royal College of Maynooth" on this sad subject, and its effect on them. Dr. David Moriarty deposed—"it must enter into the theological studies of every clergyman who has to hear confession"—(Question 123). Priest Lavelle said he studied it in his fourth year, and added that Scavaini recommends "conversing on it only in the Latin language"—(Ques. 14). Good! *so filthy only talk in Latin.* But what is to be done, Mr. Lavelle, if you are hearing the confession of a woman who knows not one word of Latin? With blue-stockings it may be easy. When St. Paul charged the Ephesians to avoid "obscenity," did he add, except in Latin? Cannot a bad thought or feeling be conveyed to the mind by Latin as well as English words?

When the Rev. D. L. Brasbie was examined by the Maynooth Commissioners, he said—"The treatise should never be put into the hands of a student at all. What connexion has the reading of this filthy matter with the word of God, or the salvation of a man's soul?"

Yet with all this there is sometimes a pretence of delicacy. The Rev. P. Connelly (who agreed to separate from his wife in order that he might be ordained a priest) asserts that, when he subsequently kissed his wife's hand, he was obliged to confess it as a sin to his Director.—Reasons, p. 3, note. But see his sad revelations about another priest and his own wife (p. 10).

passing, the effect produced upon my mind by the first sight of the *older* editions of the 'Garden of the Soul.' I remember the stumbling-block it was to me; my sense of womanly delicacy was shocked. It was a dark page in my experience when first I knelt at the feet of a mortal man to confess what should have been poured into the ear of God alone. I cannot dwell upon this. . . . Though I believe my confessor was, on the whole, as guarded as his manners were kind, at some things I was strangely startled, utterly confounded. The purity of mind and delicacy in which I had been nurtured had not prepared me for such an ordeal; and my own sincerity and dread of committing a sacrilege tended to augment the painfulness of the occasion. One circumstance especially will I recall, which fettered my conscience persuaded me I was obliged to name. My distress and terror, doubtless, made me less explicit than I otherwise might have been. The questioning, however, it elicited, and the ideas supplied by it, outraged my feelings to such an extent that, forgetting all respect for my confessor, and careless even, at the moment, whether I received absolution or not, I hastily exclaimed, 'I cannot say a word more,' while the thought rushed into my mind, 'All is true that their enemies say of them.' . . . On rising from my knees, I should have gladly fled to any distance rather than encountered his gaze; he addressed me in the most familiar manner. . . . What share I took in the conversation I never knew, and all that I remember was my burning cheeks, and my inability to raise my eyes from the ground. . . . Draw a veil! oh, purity! modesty! and womanly feeling!—a veil of oblivion, over the fearfully dangerous experience thou art called to pass through" ("Personal Experience of Roman-catholicism," pp. 34-38).

This guide-book for confessors has been reprinted again and again with the sanction of Rome. It has been pronounced that no priest need be disquieted who follows the instructions and opinions of Alphonsus. "There is not a word worthy of blame in his writings." So popes, bishops, cardinals have said, though there is so much diabolical filth in them—but *it is in Latin*. The Redemptorists of England and Ireland, what think they of Alphonsus, their master and founder? Augustians admire St. Augustine, Franciscans admire St. Francis; of course Redemptorists admire Alphonsus. Certainly they pray every 2nd of August to be "enlightened by his wholesome admonitions"—admonitions wholesome, but so filthy they should only be mentioned in Latin. So indelicate are his writings, that if they were translated into English, and exposed for sale in a shop window in *Holywell-street, or the worst street in London, we assert the police would prosecute the bookseller*. Have the Redemptorists ever dared to protest against or disown the writings or the principles of the founder of their order? Do they follow the instructions given in his Praxis? When a man wrote—"Christians should sanctify the Sabbath by reading pious books, but above all the Holy Scriptures," Pope Clement XI. was *so angry he condemned the sentence in the Bull Unigenitus*"; but no pope has ever put into the *Index Expurgatoribus* any of the filthiness of Alphonsus.

Why should the minds of priests be polluted by reading such indelicate treatises? *Why should husbands suffer their wives, why should fathers suffer their daughters to run the risk of having their minds defiled by the questions suggested by Alphonsus to guide his priests?* How oft (says Alphonsus) are the souls of priests and penitents lost by the Confessional!!

Read the Seven Penitential Psalms of David. To whom did David confess his sins? "I said *I will confess* against myself my injustice to the Lord."—Psalm xxxi. "*To thee only have I sinned.*"—Ps. l. Read in the 7th of St. Luke how Jesus dealt with a woman who was a sinner.\* Did he catechise her about the occasion, time, place of her

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\* "For confession, it is true, to them who are not used to it, as it is at the first time, and for that once, it is as troublesome as for a bashful man to speak orations in public; but where it is so perpetual and universal, and done by companies and crowds, at a solemn, set time, and when it may be done to any one besides the parish priests, to a friar that begs, or to a monk in his cloister, done in the ear, it may be to a person that hath done worse, and therefore hath no awe upon me but what his order imprints, and his viciousness takes off; when we see women and boys, princes and prelates, do the same every day; and as oftentimes they are never the better, so they are not at all ashamed: but men look upon it as a certain cure, like pulling off a man's clothes to go and wash in a river, and make it, by use and habit, by confidence and custom, to be no certain pain; and the women blush or smile, weep or are unmoved, as it happens under the veil, and the men under the boldness of their sex: where we see that men and women confess to-day, and sin to-morrow, and are not affrighted from their sins for it, because they know the worst of it, and have felt it often, and believe to be eased by it; certain it is, that a little reason,

sins? Nay, but when He saw her tears and her faith, He said—"Thy sins are forgiven thee. And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves: Who is this that forgiveth sin also? And Jesus said to the woman, Thy faith hath made thee safe, go in peace."—St. Luke's Gospel, 7th chap., vs. 48, 49, 50, R. C. Bible.

I remain your sincere friend, G. M.

Askeaton.

## Natural Results of the Confessional.

"The priests in secret confession succeed, by repeated efforts, in undermining the principles of unmarried and married women, who would otherwise have been virtuous, and betray them into sins and public scandals" ("The Hundred Grievances of the German Princes at the Diet of Newenburg, 1522, made to Adrian VI.)

GEORGE ALONZO KELLY, Esq., in an address on "The Roman-catholic Clergy and the Confessional," in the Metropolitan Hall, Dublin, February 1, 1865, said:—This is a large assembly, and I hope the majority are Roman-catholics. Ten days ago I arrived in this city with terrible secrets in my breast. I had intended to leave them there, but fate has willed it otherwise. At my hotel I met a most respected Roman-catholic citizen of Sligo, and related to him part of the history I intend for you. He said, "It is awful, but not worse than our own Father O'Flynn perpetrated." Next evening I met one of the citizens of Galway, and gave him a miniature picture. "Oh! it is dreadful," said he, "but Father Tracy with ourselves was worse. He seduced Mrs. J——, the mother of eight children, took her to Australia, and abandoned her." These two pieces of circumstantial evidence, with my own, I carried to an old friend, a Roman-catholic priest in this city, and said, "I will denounce the evil-doers." He looked at me for a moment, then pressed my hand, and said, "Have you the courage?" I said, "Yes." "Well, my son," he said, "If there is filth in the Church of Rome, the people must sweep it out. Go forth, and speak the truth, and God will bless you." Obeying that mandate, I am here. My home was at Ashbrook, within two miles of Strokes-

and a little observation, will suffice to conclude, that this practice of confession hath in it its affrightment, not so much as the horror of sin itself hath to the conscience. For they who commit sins confidently, will, with less regret (it may be), confess it in this manner, where it is the fashion for every one to do it. And when all the world observes how loosely the Italians, Spaniards, and French do live on their carnivals, giving to themselves all liberty and license to do the vilest things at that time, not only because they are for awhile to take leave of them, but because they are (as they suppose) to be soon eased of their crimes by confession, and the circular and never-failing hand of the priest, they will have no reason to admire the severity of confession, which, as it was most certainly intended as a delectory of sin, and might do its first intention, if it were equally managed, so now certainly it gives confidence to many men to sin, and to most men to neglect the greater and more effective parts of essential repentance" (Bishop Taylor's "Dissuasive from Popery," chap. 2).

town, in the county of Roscommon, surrounded by thickly-populated villages, where I was regarded by all the people as a friend. I have now no home. I am a citizen of the world. I am a zealous Roman-catholic, and dedicate the remainder of my life to the service of God. I am no orator. I appear before you as a witness to speak the truth. My evidence shall bear a striking resemblance to the life of man. It will be short, beginning with a comedy, followed by a little commonplace, and ending with a dreadful tragedy. I shall mention names, because I would not consider my evidence of any value unless I spoke the whole truth. But before I name the evil-doers, I shall introduce, with all due reverence, the name of a good man—Rev. James Conolly, C.C., Curraghroe—the peace-maker, the gentleman, the Christian, an eloquent divine, a credit to the country; may God bless him! One of his predecessors, the Rev. John Morris, now in Sligo, was a preacher of a different stamp, and whose sermons tended to make a joke of religion. He was collector of dues, and on one occasion I recollect his reading “the lists.” He said, “James ———, of Ashbrook, nothing! Is James there?” “No, your reverence,” said a timid woman, “he has got a sore foot.” “I hope,” said Father Morris, “it may get well for him.” “Peter ———, of Ashbrook, nothing! Is Peter there?” “No, your reverence,” said another woman. “If I don’t mistake,” said the Priest, “he was sowing oats as I came to the chapel, I hope they may grow for him.” “Peter ———, of Ashbrook, nothing! Peter has fifty barrels of oats in the haggard, and he would not give the Priest a shilling. I’ll go bail, I’ll open Peter’s eyes for him.” “Faith, then, if your reverence does,” said the collector at the altar rails, “he’ll pay you.” [Peter, an honest, good man, had only one eye; and his reverence, a new comer, did not know this.] This was vulgar comedy, out of place in the house of God, but of common occurrence in the west of Ireland. When the people begin to find fault with such preaching it is a healthy sign. Such preachers as these injure religion and increase “the dues.” If the man’s foot festered, and that he died, every one in the parish would say, “He could not have better luck.” If the oats—probably sown in a wet soil—failed to grow, every one would say, “Do you remember what Father John said, ‘If Peter paid the Priest, the oats would not fail?’” I pity the simple-minded generous people of the West; but God will open their eyes, and they will be saved from the darkness and the bondage.

The majority of our priests are whiskey-drinkers. I object to this. Many of yourselves must know that a man cannot have the fear of God in his heart, and four or five tumblers of whiskey-punch in his stomach. Dean M’Dermot, of Strokestown, and his two curates are drunkards. The curates get drunk before dinner, and the dean after it. In the year 1858, the dean was in the habit of treating the curates to punch, and then sending them to hear confessions in the old dark chapel, which was lighted by candles fastened to the wall. The consequences of late hours and whiskey-punch I shall reserve for its proper place, the awful end of the dreadful tragedy.

The dean tells his congregation it is a mortal sin to lose Mass, and yet he stands at the chapel gate every Sunday, with an oaken stick in his hand, refusing to let any one into the chapel who cannot pay. Can this man believe it is a mortal sin to lose Mass? Is it not time to rid the Church of such scandals? The dean admitted one man in my presence who had not paid, and his observation was characteristic: "Come in," said the dean, "you have no money, you were always mean." We have in the village of Ardikellan, within two miles of Strokestown, the Rev. Peter Geraghty, R.C.C., living with a woman to whom he is not married. The priest and his unmarried wife are a public scandal.

I now come to the tragedy. In 1858 we had in Strokestown the Rev. John Curly. The history of this man will turn your hearts to stone, and fill your breasts with indignation. He lived in the house of Michael Cox, a baker, who had a beautiful innocent child, sixteen years of age, called Mary. Oh! if you had known her. She was "as pure as a dew-drop," but she was ruined by this ruffian. I saw a letter written from Liverpool by this poor child to the priest, and in it she said, "I am destitute—I am dying! Save me—save me!" She returned to Dublin, and was sent to the Convent at Navan. The story of this child's ruin was whispered through the town, and the place became too hot for the priest. Dr. Gillooly, the Roman-catholic Bishop, removed him to Sligo, and appointed him Professor in the Catholic Seminary in that town. This occurred in December, 1858. Curly remained in Sligo for some time, and was removed to Cootehill. I know nothing of his history in Cootehill, but in 1862 he was sent to Kilglass, and lodged in the house of a man named Williams, and this man had a daughter named Eliza. Curly ruined her by force. She threatened a prosecution, but he proposed a compromise, which, by the aid of priestly influence, was accepted. He sent for his brother, and got him married to the girl. In a month after, he took his brother to Australia with him, and the woman he ruined was abandoned to the fate of the outcast. *This abandoned profligate ruined many girls in his neighbourhood,\* and HE HAD ALWAYS USED THE CONFESSIONAL*

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\* "When quite young, I became acquainted with a Protestant family living in the neighbourhood of my birthplace, consisting of a widow lady, two sons, and one daughter. . . . The whole family were members of the Protestant Church. There was then in the neighbourhood a *nunnery* of the order of the Jesuits, to which was attached a fashionable school for young ladies, and the mother, yielding in this case to the malign influence of fashion, though not without a struggle in parting, consigned her to the charge of the Jesuits. . . . Soon after the daughter went to school I entered the College of Maynooth, and in due time was ordained a Roman-catholic priest. . . . An interval of some years passed before I met my young friend again, when, happening to meet her at a large party, she asked me whether I would preach her *reception* sermon, as she intended becoming a *nun* and taking the *white veil*. . . . I went according to promise, preached, &c. . . . Having no clerical connexion with the convent, I had not seen her for the three months following. At the expiration of that time, one of the *lay sisters* of the convent delivered to me a note, in which my young friend expressed a wish to see me on *something important*. I

AS A TRAP. I shall give you in the words of this wretched victim of his lust, the history of her fall. "I was," she said, "doing my best to be good. I went to Mass every morning, to Confessions every week. I was at Confession with Curly one day in June; I told him everything. I said I am burning with passion, but I have sinned only in thought, what am I to do?" "Oh," said the Priest, "we are all afflicted by the sins of the flesh, they are our greatest enemies. Poor Priest as I am, I have suffered in that way myself. Read good books and pray to God. If you call at my house to-morrow, at two o'clock, I'll give you St. Liguori on the Christian virtues." She called at his house the next day, at two o'clock; the day was hot, his reverence gave her cold punch; he pressed her to take more, she obeyed the HOLY FATHER. His library was in his bed-room, the bed-room adjoined the parlour; into this den of iniquity he led her. The Roman maiden was dishonoured, her innocence destroyed. I see you are moved, and I am delighted to see in your eyes the light that indicates the triumph of my cause. You are made of flesh and blood; this outrage related to you raises up a sudden flood of rage; it must increase when I tell you—gracious God be calm—this reverend ruffian is now Chaplain to a Convent in Sydney (profound sensation, the entire audience rose like a murmuring ocean).

I shall stay in Dublin for ten days. I ask you, Roman-catholic citizens, to aid me. Form a Committee, seek for evidence regarding the conduct of the priests in every part of the country, and publish it. The condition of the province of Connaught is awful. Assist me to save the people. Do this, and God will bless you. Prove my truth. Dr. Gillooly, the Roman-catholic Bishop of Elphin, may take an interest in this question, concerning the truth of which I challenge contradiction. Here, in the presence of God, I declare I will, if necessary, sacrifice my life; but as sure as I stand here, so sure shall I go forth,

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lost no time in calling on her, and, being a priest, I was immediately admitted; but never can I forget the melancholy picture of lost beauty and fallen humanity which met my astonished gaze in the person of my once beautiful and virtuous friend. I had been then about eighteen months a Romish priest, and was not without some knowledge of their profligate lives, and, therefore, I was better prepared for, and could more easily anticipate, what was to come. 'I sent for you, my friend, to see you once more before my death. I have insulted God and disgraced my family; I am in the *family-way*, and must die.' I discovered from her confession the parent, and that the *mother abbess* of the convent advised her to take medicine, . . . but that she knew from the lay-sister who delivered me the note, and who was a confidential servant in the convent, that the medicine would contain *poison*. I gave her such advice as I could in the capacity of a Romish priest. I advised her to send for the bishop, and consult him. 'I cannot do it,' she said; '*my destroyer is my confessor*.' I was silenced. I had no more to say. I was bound by my oath to be true to him. I retired, leaving my friend to her fate, but promising, at her request, to return in a fortnight. According to my promise, I did return in a fortnight, *but the foul deed was done; she was no more*" ("Auricular Confession," by Priest Hogan, pp. 19-28).

assisted by God, to save the daughters of Rome from pollution, and the religion of my fathers from disgrace.

Subsequently, Mr. Kelly wrote to Dr. Gillooly, Roman-catholic Bishop of Elphin, Sligo, the following letter:—

MY LORD,—Your Lordship remembers me. You cannot forget that in the Hall of the Irish Metropolis, at noonday on the 1st of February, 1865, in presence of the assembled citizens, I denounced the holy seducers, your Lordship's Clergy, who had disgraced your Lordship's Church and mine. You remember that in the year 1858, the Rev. John Curly was Curate in Strokestown. You know he seduced several Roman-catholic maidens, and YOU KNOW HE USED THE CONFESSIONAL AS A TRAP to effect his infernal designs on unsuspecting innocence.\* I related the history of this monster in presence of a Dublin audience, and I defied your Lordship to contradict my statements; you did not do so, because you dare not, in the presence of five hundred Roman-catholic witnesses, who would contradict your Lordship. Your silence was a sign of common sense, but it damaged the Confessional, and I hope to destroy it by simply telling the truth. You know that Curly's brother was compelled to marry one of the victims of the Priest's lust. It was your duty then to suspend him, but you did not do so. With the evidence of his iniquities before your eyes, you promoted him to the rank of "Professor" to the Catholic School in Sligo. The Catholic merchants of Sligo owe you a debt of gratitude for sending such a man to educate in religion and morality their little children. Though you were well aware of all his criminal acts, you permitted him in 1863 to leave the country still a Priest in "Holy Orders." You permitted this for the sake of our Holy Mother Church. In August, 1864, Curly was chaplain to a convent in Sydney!! You are a good and faithful shepherd! It was through your negligence the wolf entered the fold of the lambs in Sydney! When Curly entered that sanctuary as "Father Confessor," the God of justice frowned in wrath on the Roman-catholic Bishop of Elphin.

In 1858 I was well aware of Curly's guilt. You may say, Why did you not denounce him then? I answer, Your Lordship knows I was a faithful son of the Church, and that I was taught from my early childhood to conceal the sins of the Priest for the sake of religion.†

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\* "I have often heard of wicked young men saying to each other, 'Come, let us go to confession, and the curate will teach us a great many corrupt things which we never knew.' And many young girls have told me in confession that, in order to become acquainted with details on those matters pleasing to corrupt nature, they went purposely to the confessional to speak about it with their spiritual father" ("Confessions of a French Catholic Priest," p. 110. New York. 1837).

† "A PRIEST CONVICTED OF SEDUCTION.—We read in a morning contemporary an account of the conviction at Turin of a Roman-catholic priest. The culprit is Don Gurlino, attached, in the capacity of second curate, first to the church of San Carlo, afterwards to that of the Carmelite order. Amongst his regular professional duties were of course those connected with the confessional,

It was in November, 1864, I discovered that Curly was chaplain to a convent in Sydney. The discovery filled me with horror. I made up my mind to give the world a history of the Confessional, and in order to provide myself with evidence I went to Confession, to several of your Lordship's clergy. I selected the young men, as they had little experience, and my object was to make them confess to me, and I succeeded. In my confession, I said to the young Priest, "My faith in the Roman-catholic religion is shaken. I cannot believe the seducer can forgive the victim of his lust. You know the history of Curly, and the Church permits him to be chaplain to a convent in Sydney."

and these duties he violated in a manner so foul and atrocious, that no less than *thirty-three young girls* would appear to have fallen victims to his systematic and scientific profligacy. Not more than 40 years of age, possessing a singularly handsome face and figure, Don Gurlino combined with the natural influence wielded over the mind of the youthful penitent by a spiritual guide, the influence, not less natural, of his own personal attractions. Both influences were skilfully brought to bear in the exciting privacy of the confessional. All the opportunities which it affords of gradually, yet surely, tainting the mind were employed, and employed with too fatal success. The wretch was, it appears, in the habit of accompanying his oral temptations with the appliances and means of obscene books and lascivious prints to heighten and accelerate their effect. Working on the passions by a graduated scale of literary and pictorial excitement, the curate of St. Charles and the "Carmelites" could seize, for his infernal ends, the exact moment when the unsuspecting confidence of girlhood prepared for him an easy prey. Don Gurlino was at last detected by the very means which he had employed. The relations of a young creature, one of his latest victims, found in her possession an obscene print, and insisted on her telling them from whom she had procured it. The girl refused for some time, but yielding to their menaces, stammered forth the name of her confessor. She added that not she alone, but likewise several of her young friends, had received from Don Gurlino immoral books and prints, and, debauched by his arts, had yielded up their honour to their spiritual guide. The relations at once communicated the facts to, and deposited the prints with, the district police magistrates, who lost no time in communicating with the higher law authorities, and these latter at once instituted criminal proceedings against the priest. Although the trial was conducted with closed doors, enough of the evidence transpired to fill all Turin with horror and indignation. The guilty acts of the criminal appear to have extended over a term of several years. The full extent of his debaucheries during all that period cannot, of course, be ascertained. One fact, however, is beyond all doubt—that on the trial itself *thirty-three young girls bore testimony* to the adoption towards themselves of the wicked arts of seduction with which the criminal stood charged. On this overwhelming mass of evidence Don Gurlino was found guilty, and sentenced by the Criminal Court of Turin to seven years' solitary confinement. The term of the sentence will probably be abridged by natural causes. Shame, if not remorse, has already worked such fearful ravages on the prisoner, that on the last day of the trial he was hardly any longer recognisable."—*Standard*.

\* "Whereas certain ecclesiastics, in the kingdom of Spain, and in the cities and dioceses thereof, having the cure of souls, or exercising such cure for others, or otherwise deputed to hear the confessions of penitents, *have broken out into such heinous acts of iniquity as to abuse the sacrament of penance in the very act of hearing confession, not fearing to injure the same sacrament.* . . .

This is the Priest's answer : " He was a bad man. All human nature is weak, and bad as he was, it was not his fault—they seduced him ; there is ' No ho ' with women ; they often try to seduce us in the Confessional. I believe it is because we are forbidden." I had the like answer from four others of your Lordship's clergy, and then made a firm resolution to exhibit the Confessional.

Let us examine the trap, my Lord, and see what it is like. I know it well. The wives and daughters of Roman-catholics are taught to believe that thinking on certain subjects is a sin. At the age of 17 ideas enter the mind of a maiden which she would blush to name to her mother, but she has no hesitation at all in revealing them to a handsome young curate fresh from Maynooth. It is a pleasant, or dangerous position for the Priest, but the man who permits his wife or daughter to enter the confessional, deserves to see her shame. Common sense is not a match for old-established habits.\* I am sure that several Roman-catholics will continue to believe that a Priest can seduce a virgin and forgive the sin, and these well-disposed people will hide the shame for sake of the Church. Poor wretches, I pity them. You know, my Lord, several thousand people go to Mass every morning, to Confession every week for absolution, and they begin to sin on Monday morning as usual, and continue to sin all their lives with undeviating regularity. The truth I relate will not influence these pious sinners, but I believe there is a sufficient quantity of common sense in the world to raise a barrier between the sanctity of home and the sins of the Confessional. It is to this common sense, which I see abundantly here in England, that I appeal. I APPEAL TO MY COUNTRYMEN IN AMERICA AND AUSTRALIA. TO THEM I SAY IT IS THE DUTY OF THE PEOPLE TO SUSPEND A BAD PRIEST WHEN THE BISHOP HAS FAILED TO DO SO.—Yours,

Bristol.

GEORGE ALONZO KELLY.

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by entering and provoking, or trying to entice and provoke females to lewd actions, at the very time when they were making their confession" (Bull of Pope Paul IV. against Solicitants).

" Whosoever shall attempt to solicit or provoke any persons, whosoever they may be, to the performance of vile acts, either between themselves or any other person whatsoever, *in the act of sacramental confession*, either before, or immediately after, or at the time, or under the pretext of confession, &c., &c. . . . We command to all confessors that they should admonish their penitents, whom they knew to have been solicited by others, as above, respecting the obligation of reporting solicitants to the inquisitors or the ordinances of the place" (Bull of Pope Gregory XV., A.D. 1622, called *Universi Domini*).

\* " It is time, as the blessed Apostle saith, that judgments should begin with the house of the Lord. For *all the corruption which is in the people chiefly proceed from the clergy*, since, if the priest who is anointed sins, he causes the people to sin, for, when the laity behold them living vilely and outrageously, through their example they fall into iniquity and wickedness. And when they are reproved by any one, they immediately excuse themselves, saying, The son must do what he sees the father do, and it is enough if the disciple resembles his master. The saying of the prophet is fulfilled : ' As is the people so is the priest ' " (Pope Innocent III. Speech at the Council of Lateran).









